



AquaFed

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
PRIVATE WATER OPERATORS

MARCH 8, 2007

Water and Sanitation for Women

Private Operators contribute

Today almost half the World's women still have no adequate water and sanitation at home. Shortage, indignity, sickness, drudgery, deprivation – this is their water world. Women suffer the most from these deficiencies.

Working for and with women, private water operators are engaged every day to change this. Delivering water and sanitation reliably changes a woman's world.

PROVIDING WOMEN ACCESS TO VITAL WATER AND SANITATION

People need water every day. Without an affordable and reliable supply of water and effective sanitation, basic human rights are infringed. More than 1.6 million children under the age of five die every year simply because the water they drink is not safe. 1.1 billion people around the world have no access to safe drinking water. That's one person in 6. Even more than this - 2.6 billion - don't have proper sanitation. Who does this mainly affect? Women and children. Women are the first to suffer from unsafe water and lack of toilets and sewers. Projects aimed at



Private Operators implement the Right to Water

- Private water operators have publicly committed their support to the Right to Water. They did this through AquaFed, their International Federation at the World Water Forum in Mexico. They have stressed the need to go beyond recognising the existence of the right. For the right to be meaningful authorities need operators to ensure water supply and sanitation for all.

improving access to water and improving sanitary conditions benefit women throughout the world. Many more are needed.

Private operators deliver safe water. That is their job all over the globe. They have improved water access and sanitation to tens of millions of families in the developing world.

Private water operators are committed to using their expertise to improving the quality of life of more women, implementing their right to access to good quality water and to sanitation.

What operators do to help deliver water and sanitation

- Private companies work hand in hand with governments to provide people with safe water.
- More and more governments are taking advantage of the professional expertise offered by small, medium-size or large water companies. They can assign many different missions to their private operators, including raising the quality and reliability of service, expanding water networks to new areas or connecting more people.
- In the recent past, private companies have connected millions of people to fresh and clean drinking water in the developing world.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON WOMEN AND GIRLS?

- Women usually have the responsibility for water in their homes. They have to have water to do the cooking, washing, and cleaning. When it is not supplied they have to find it from somewhere: a distant well, standpipe or expensive vendor. This is the daily drudgery of many women in developing countries. It can dominate a woman's life, depriving her of energy and opportunity.
- Women are directly responsible for the health and welfare of their families. They are the first point of contact with water poverty.
- In developing countries more than one family out of two, some 3 billion people, do not have basic access to a tap. It is the women, and very often the young girls, who have to do most of the fetching from communal sources.
- In rural areas, they have to walk up to 8 hours a day, often bringing back a mere 15 to 20 litres which has to cover the needs of a whole family. Carrying this heavy load consumes much of their energy (requiring 600 to 800 Kcalories of food per day). This chore often deprives girls of time to attend school or mothers a job. Reliable and accessible water gives women the opportunity to participate in the local economy.
- Lack of good sanitation in schools means less girls attend and more drop out.
- Lack of sanitation at home exposes women to harassment and attack, as they often have to walk some distance from the safety of their homes, simply to use the nearest toilet if there is one. Often there is not!

Women's water chores at a public water point in Morocco.



The water burden in Senegal. ▶

- Young children are the most vulnerable of all when water is unclean and it is mainly the women who have to care for their sick offspring.
- Without good water supply and waste water removal personal hygiene is very difficult.



WOMEN PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN MANAGING WATER

Women are strong pillars of community life, particularly in deprived areas. They are often more pragmatic than men. It is natural that they take part in the preparation and implementation of new water

or sanitation projects. Women's important contribution is not always recognized by governments. However there are clear examples of how giving the power of choice to women has led to significant political and social improvements.

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In many cases, women take an active part in managing water, either at home or in the community. Increasingly they also participate as professionals in operators and in public authorities. They can be plumbers. They can maintain water networks. Some are managers of water service providers, either public or privately-controlled.

Elisabeth-Miren, Saude and her sister Saldenise in Manaus, Brazil

• Since having a fresh supply of water in their home, Elisabeth-Miren, Saude and her sister Saldenise, all in their thirties, have opened a small café in Manaus. "Fresh water has improved our lives by 90 %. Before, we couldn't have opened up a business like this. We spent all our time washing clothes and cleaning the house. In addition, with good quality water, most of our children's illnesses have disappeared. What's even better is that it's also four times cheaper than the poor quality

water we had to buy before!"

• In 2000, Aguas do Amazonas, a private company, was awarded the contract for supplying water to Manaus, Brazil. Their first step was to look for the best people to consult on local projects. It immediately became clear that these were not the official self-proclaimed political representatives, but local women. Aguas do Amazonas worked closely with the international NGO ESSOR, who have vast experience in local community issues.

Chile,
women receiving training in
domestic plumbing. ▼

In Chile, a private operator trains women

• In 1993 Aguas Andinas launched a training course in sanitary plumbing aimed specifically at women. The aim of this training was to help reduce in-house water leaks and thereby significantly reduce household costs. During the last 5 years, more than 11,000 women have learnt the basic skills of home plumbing, helping them to take direct control of their family's health and budget.



Private companies actively promote female staff

- In Germany Eurawasser has been particularly successful in promoting women to senior management. One of its regional managers started her career as an apprentice at the age of 15. The Technical Director at Rostock, their biggest operation, is a woman.
- In the Philippines 5 out of 8 area managers at Manila Water are women.
- In China, 38% of Veolia Water Asia's 7,200 employees, and 2 out of 5 regional managers, are women.

HOW PRIVATE WATER OPERATORS CHANGE WOMEN'S LIVES

Jakarta: now the water is connected this girl goes to school. ▶

Throughout the world private water operators by their work with local authorities improve the lives of countless women and children. Their expertise helps them get the best out of existing water and sanitation systems. This generates savings which can help develop new projects in areas previously deprived of water. These savings can also be used to reduce connection or consumption charges. Many private operators are providing water in slums. The expertise they have gained can be used by water authorities to improve water supply and sanitation in other badly served areas. Providing formal access to water networks usually reduces the real costs that poor people have to pay to overcome system failure or find alternative informal solutions. This puts money back into each household. When public authorities and private operators work hand in hand to improve and expand water services, the results are usually a dramatic improvement in the life of women and girls:



- ▶ Women no longer have to fetch water from distant sources
- ▶ They no longer have to carry heavy loads long distances, hence suffer less physically
- ▶ Better quality water is available when needed
- ▶ Infant mortality goes down
- ▶ Water actually costs less and more water can be used without straining the household budget
- ▶ Health expense is less because water-borne diseases are eradicated
- ▶ Girls and women have more time to study
- ▶ Women have better cleaning and sanitary options
- ▶ Women can spend more time with their children
- ▶ Women have more time to work and set up small businesses

This water tap permitted these women to start a small business cooking and selling rice crisps. ▼



Providing safe water and removing wastewater increases human dignity and reduces gender inequality. This is why private operators actively support and contribute to access to water and sanitation policies.

Uganda - Gender equality and Poverty reduction

• In Uganda there are 180 identified small towns spread throughout the country. 10 private operators provide the water in 57 cities out of these. Aided by government grants, they have helped reduce the average distance needed to fetch water from 3 kilometers to 1/2 a kilometer. There create more and more connections every year, over 2,600 in 2006. Each of these serves 8 to 10 people. Water coverage

in these towns has increased to 63%. This compares to only 36 % for the small towns not managed by private operators.

• This private sector commitment has a direct impact on the lives of Ugandan women. They have been able to start up small businesses rearing chickens and pigs, zero grazing, and growing vegetables. Their children can now attend schools which at last have access to clean tap water and hygienic toilet facilities. The quality of the water itself has improved, reducing infant mortality. 95 % of the water samples now meet

quality and dosing standards.

• The implementation of water services has also been welcomed in other public institutions, including prisons where improvements in sanitary conditions, especially for the female inmates and those with babies, have been made possible.

• Reliable women are being recruited more and more by private operators in order to manage community water kiosks. Women are also directly involved in the decision making process at local water board level.

• Women are at the core of water management and the dissemination of good use of water.



Uganda, girls fetching water for their school.

Private operators promote integrity in the water sector

• AquaFed, the International Federation of Private Water Operators, supports the anti-corruption drive in the water sector. Mid-2006, the Federation joined the Water Integrity Network.

• To reduce costs and wastage and improve services, private operators work hard to eliminate corruption. It is part of their job and has direct benefits for their customers.

DECREASING INFANT MORTALITY

More than 1.6 million children under the age of five die every year due to unsafe water. Simple practices like washing hands with soap can reduce infant diarrhoea by 33 %, or the risk of respiratory disease by 30 %. But it is difficult to wash without water. Over the past decade, private operators have improved water quality for tens of millions of people. This has had a direct impact on infant mortality. Mothers and women are at the forefront in fighting disease and nothing can replace the joy of healthy children for a mother.

Improving health in Argentina

• Over the last 13 years, Aguas Argentinas, a private company, has brought enormous health benefits to the population of Buenos Aires. Its approach to water management has been to involve local communities in all levels of the decision process. More than 1,300 jobs have been created. Since the beginning of the public-private partnership, infant mortality has been reduced by 25 % in poor neighbourhoods and by 5 to 7 % in other areas.

• When the Argentinian government ended the contract in 2006, over 2 million people had already been connected to clean water and over 1 million to the sewage system. Children are now growing up in a much healthier environment.

CONNECTING POOR PEOPLE TO WATER NETWORKS

Poor women without access to water network.



In many countries such as South Africa, Senegal, Gabon, Uganda, Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia, Indonesia, the Philippines, public authorities have asked private operators to provide fresh safe water in areas which didn't have it before. The lives of at least 5 million women and girls have been directly improved through connections to water networks achieved by these public-private partnerships. These women now have the chance to live their lives in much better hygienic conditions and improved cleanliness. Having fewer water chores means they have better job opportunities and more time for education.

In many slum areas, the price of a litre of water has been reduced by up to a tenth of its former price.

Establishing new connections costs a lot of money. To make them affordable these costs have often been subsidised by other customers or through public funding.

Burkina Faso – subsidised connections

- The cost of connecting to water networks is often prohibitive, especially in low income countries. A significant number of these have developed pro poor access to water programmes in cooperation with international financial institutions and private water operators.
- In Burkina Faso, the National Office of Water and Sanitation (ONEA) relied on the technical assistance of Veolia Water to enhance its commercial approaches, including the launch of a social connection program aimed at creating 50,000 new connections in Ouagadougou in 2006-2007. By the end of 2006, around 35,000 connections were already in place.
- As a result of the collaboration of different partners the connection fee has been divided by 6. Reduced to 20,000 FCFA, all taxes included, the fee is now well below the average monthly salary of 30,000 CFA." The General Director of the National Office declared publicly in December 2005 that this was "a true Christmas present !»
- Women in Ouagadougou can at long last afford a connection to safe water. This new access has genuinely improved living conditions at home, freeing up money to be spent on other things.

SANITATION IMPROVES WOMEN'S LIVES

The UN has declared 2008 the International Year of Sanitation. Hygiene, health, dignity, safety and environment are key issues for the household and directly affect women. Sanitation is often a taboo subject. Politicians don't talk enough about it even though locally it is one of the most pressing needs.

Eliminating human excreta and used water are essential for healthy life. Most of the time bad sanitation denotes a lack of toilets or latrines, whether this be at home, in schools or public places such as markets. When there is no proper sanitation the risk of disease is higher. It is the women who have to look after sick children, and the young daughters who lose out on education.



Morocco – developing sanitation at school

- When girls approach puberty, lack of adequate sanitation is a true handicap. They often have to walk long distances to use toilets and with menstruation a lack of proper sanitation facilities is a major reason for girls dropping out of school.
- In Tangiers, AMENDIS, the private operator that manages water and sanitation services, has set up a 3-year programme in partnership with UNICEF. It is aimed at reducing school drop-out levels by installing toilets. 30 schools are concerned.

Proud owner of a new
“archloo” toilet
built by women.

Female workers building
«archloo» toilets
in South Africa.

Lack of sanitation also affects drinking water because it pollutes water resources and aquifers and interferes in the water cycle.

In many places public authorities are using private operators to take action to provide sanitation facilities and to remove wastewater and treat it. For example over 1 million people have had their household connected to sewers by a private company in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and 500,000 in La Paz and El Alto (Bolivia).

Building toilets provides women with employment in rural South Africa

- Tshoniswa Mbinza is one of the many rural women who have been employed by Amanz’ abantu, a private service provider. The company designs and builds eco-friendly toilets in South Africa’s Eastern Cape. These facilities are named archloos because of their distinctive shape. The 41-year-old mother of three found the job which now enables her to feed her school-going children. She is a fine example of a woman doing well in a predominantly male industry, - and on top of this she is providing ecologically sound, hygienic toilet systems. «Never mind the fact that we are making some money, we have also got what we have spent years asking the government for – toilets!»
- After initial training, Mbinza and her partner, two women, build a minimum of five toilets a month. «They earn R230 for each of these which gives them take-home pay of R575 per month. This is considerably more than the R40 a week Mbinza was making doing other people’s laundry».
- Amanz’ abantu has built more than 12,000 archloos in the province, providing local people not only with better health but also with jobs.
Reported by Chandré Prince, Daily Dispatch, 11 May 2005



CARING ABOUT WOMEN EMPLOYEES

Although still an industry where men are in the majority, many private operators have special policies aimed at the needs of their female employees. In Chile, Aguas Andinas refunds nursery costs, making life easier for working mothers. Aguas Andinas was ranked in Chile's Top 10 "Best Firms for Women".

In Australia, United Water offers flexible work practices with opportunities for part time, job share and work from home. The company was given the "Employer of Choice for Women Award" by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency in 2006.

"Employer of choice for Women" in Australia

- United Water is formally recognised as an «Employer of Choice for Women» by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency. EOWA is a local government authority. In 2006, United Water was the only water services provider in Australia, and one of only seven South Australian companies to receive this accolade.
- United Water's approach is that it offers a range of family- friendly work practices.

This provides support and flexibility for employees and helps them reconcile the needs of their careers and their private lives. In particular, the company offers flexible work practices with part time, job share, and work from home options.

- United Water is an Australian private water operator that supplies water and sanitation services in South Australia and Victoria States. It has a staff of 500.

"Best firm for women" in Chile

Aguas Andinas places special value on its female employees. It recently promoted a program refunding nursery costs for children under the age of 5. This refund program gives families up to 220 € per month, topping up women's salaries by a sizeable 20% on average. Thanks to this policy women can combine career and family aspirations more efficiently.

In 2003, Aguas Andinas ranked 9th in Chile's national contest to find the "Best Firm for Women".

The head of a commercial department recalls the time when she has had a baby:

"I have been nursing for 8 months and it had never been a problem. The bosses knew my children could be ill or have fever from time to time, but they have never told me anything. There is a solidarity spirit in Aguas Andinas".

Aguas Andinas is the privately-controlled water operator that supplies water and sanitation services in the capital Santiago.

Mobile customer center in Morocco – saving women time and fighting corruption. ▶



AquaFed is the International Federation of Private Water Operators.

It aims to solve water challenges by making private sector know-how available to the international community.

It is open to companies and company associations of all sizes and from all countries.

It brings together more than 250 water companies serving communities and people in 38 countries.

AquaFed exists to connect private water operators, public institutions and civil society organisations.

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