

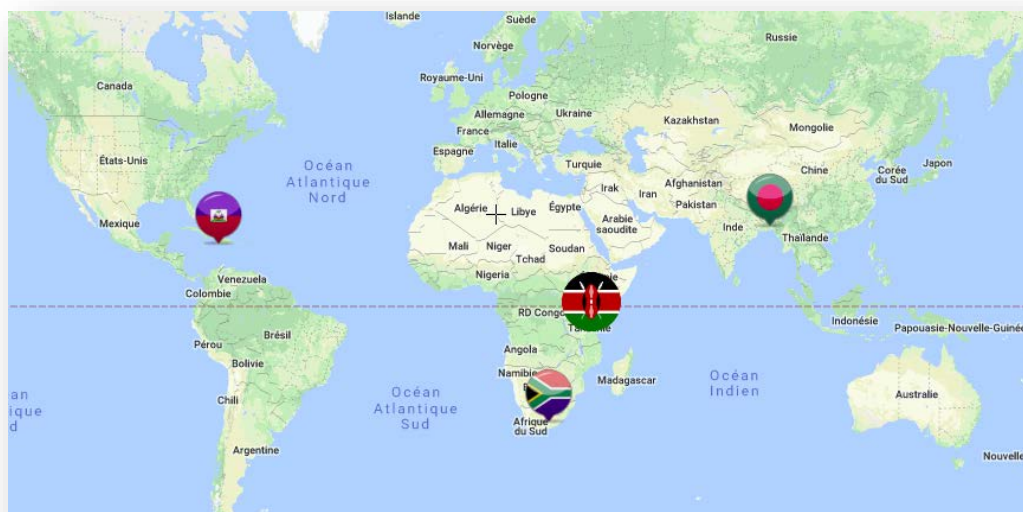


On 22 December 1992, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution to establish World Water Day as an annual conduit to raise awareness of water related issues and the importance of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Annually, the Day is observed on 22 March.

This year, the theme for World Water Day is “Leaving no one behind”, which is also the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG6 aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all by 2030, especially women and girls who, in many societies, bear a disproportionate amount of the burden and consequence of irregular access to clean, safe water.

Graduate Women International (GWI) takes part in promoting universal, safe access to clean water and sanitation for all women and girls through advocacy work at the international, national and local levels, through our special consultative status with the United Nations (UN), and at the grassroots level through the work of our National Federations and Associations (NFAs).

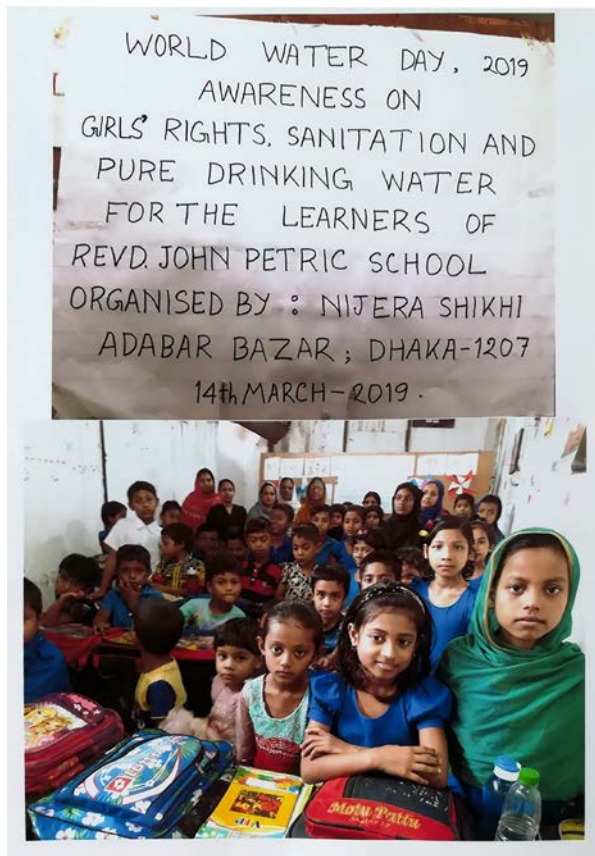
On the heels of an impactful 2019 World Water Day, GWI is highlighting some projects and inputs about water issues from our NFAs in **Bangladesh, Haiti, Kenya and South Africa** to raise awareness about the importance of access to water and sanitation all and especially for women and girls.





Bangladesh: Bangladesh Federation of University Women (BFUW)

According to Water.org, Bangladesh has one of the highest population densities in the world, with a population of 160 million living within 57,000 square miles. Of those 160 million people, four million lack safe water and 85 million lack improved sanitation. Lack of access to safe water and improved sanitation facilities in rural areas, overcrowded urban conditions, and a lack of healthy ways of disposing waste in urban centers, all contribute to the water and sanitation crisis in Bangladesh¹.



On 14 March 2019, the Bangladesh Federation of University Women (BFUW) partnered with Nijera Shikhi, a non-governmental organization based in Bangladesh and focused on the eradication of illiteracy in the country, for to conduct a World Water Day workshop at the Reverend John Petric School in Dakha, Bangladesh on girls' rights, sanitation and drinking water.

The aim of the workshop was to increase the children's knowledge and awareness of the importance water and sanitation. Children learned about the crucial role of water for all forms of life and reflected on the importance of water in every aspect of their everyday lives including drinking, cooking, washing, cleaning, plantations and virtually every type of productions from food, medicines, chemicals to clothing. Children then discussed the ways they could be more cautious about water management in their everyday lives as well as the ways they could share what they learned with their friends, families and communities regarding the need for, proper uses and importance of water.

The programme was conducted by Professor Suraiya Siddiqui, member of BAUW and Executive Secretary of Nijera Shikhi, and organized by Mr. Niranjan Sarkar, Nijera Shikhi Programme Manager, assisted by Mrs. Kanaklata Bain, Mrs. Shahnaj Begum and Mrs. Rebeka Sultana. Also attending where Prof. Rashida Hossain, BFUW President; Prof. Gul Bahar, BFUW Secretary General; Nabia Bari, BFUW Joint Secretary; Matahara Mannan, BFUW Treasurer and other members of BFUW. GWI thanks Nabia Bari, BFUW Joint Secretary for providing the above information on the workshop.

¹ WATER.ORG, Our Impact – Bangladesh (2019) <https://water.org/our-impact/bangladesh/>



Haiti: Haitian Association of Graduates Women of Universities (AHFDU)

Comments provided by Izelle D. Dubuisson, AHFDU President

Problem of water and sanitation in Haiti

“In Haiti, since February 7, 2019 with the outbreak of various demonstrations calling for the resignation of President Jovenel Moses in power, there is severe a lack of water in Haiti. In Port-au-Prince, the population is queuing to buy a gallon of water and the shortage of clean water is making headlines in Haiti. We do not need to talk about electricity that does not exist at all in rural and urban areas of Haiti.



Haitians line up to collect water in a camp set up nearby the National Palace, in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti Earthquake.

Nearly five million Haitians draw water from rivers and unprotected springs. This water of questionable quality contributes to the prevalence of cases of diarrhea in children. While the **Haitian Association of Graduate Women of Universities (HAGWU)** reported just over two thirds of rural households (72%) who did not use any means of water treatment, the AHFDU-Haiti found no significant change because the majority of the population (63%) do not use tablets or purifying sachets to treat water in Haiti”.

Access to clean water increased from 62% in 2000 to 69% in 2010 after the earthquake

“The Haitian water and sanitation system remain weak. The national coverage rate for drinking water is 64% with a rate of 77% in urban areas and only 48% in rural areas. Rural women and girls are the main victims of water and sanitation shortages”.

The context

“The rate of access to basic sanitation is 26%. In a disaggregated way, 34% of the population in urban areas have access to basic sanitation, leaving two-thirds of the population (nearly 6.5 million people, including children) in extreme-risk conditions fecal peril. At the national level, 23% of the population practices open defecation, including 41% of the population in rural areas. With the spread of the cholera epidemic, thousands of women and girls who do not have access to a medical clinic or health center die at home”.

51% of households in rural areas do not have access to drinking water

“Access to improved sanitation increased from 14 percent in 2008/09 to 26 percent in 2015. More than 80 percent of rural households still lack access to improved sanitation.

The situation is really dismal in Haiti, there is no real drinking water in Haiti the majority of small businesses that sell water or treated water are not really treated water, and a large majority of the Haitian population is starting to have a fever epidemic and people living in rural areas are the main victims”.



Kenya: Kenya Association of University Women (KAUW)

According to Water.org, with a population of 46 million, 41 percent of Kenyans still rely on unimproved water sources, such as ponds, shallow wells and rivers, while 59 percent of Kenyans use unimproved sanitation solutions. These challenges are especially evident in the rural areas and the urban slums. Only 9 out of 55 public water service providers in Kenya provide continuous water supply, leaving people to find their own ways of searching for appropriate solutions to these basic needs².



Target women producing potatoes vines

In 2017 – 2018, the Kenya Association of University Women (KAUW) conducted awareness raising activities amongst the beneficiaries of their “Capacity building through livelihood skills development among rural women in Siaya County” project, funded through the GWI Bina Roy Partners in Development grant mechanism. This project aimed to address gender inequality and reduce poverty prevalence among rural women by improving the girl child education at the primary and secondary level. The main objective of the project

was to provide livelihood skills training to mothers of girls attending primary and secondary school. The empowerment of women and girls with agricultural livelihood skills included an awareness raising component on the importance of water and training session aiming to improve access to water by the acquisition of skills tailored to the needs of the target women and girls in Siaya County. The target women learned:

- 1) To dig trenches in order to reduce dependence on rain fed farming, thus decreasing risks of crop failures, food insecurity and malnutrition. As part of the watershed system training of the project, the target rural women and girls were taught to use irrigation techniques that not only preserve water but also improve access to water for domestic and hygienic purposes within the community.
- 2) To effectively collect rain water at the household level using run-off harvesting technique. Traditionally, this involves harvesting the rain from a roof. The rain will collect in gutters that channel the water into downspouts and then into some sort of storage vessel. The collected water can then be used for domestic purposes and irrigation of the households’ sack farming areas that the target women and girls created thanks to the skills acquired through the other components of the project.



An example of trench within the natural watershed system created for training purpose as part of the KAUW BRPID Project in 2017-2018.

GWI thanks Syprose Ogola, KAUW Project Coordinator and Dorothy Achieng Omollo- Odhiambo, KAUW acting President and CIR for sharing the above information.

² WATER.ORG, Our Impact – Kenya (2019) <https://water.org/our-impact/kenya/>



South Africa: South African Association of Women Graduates (SAAWG)

Comments provided by Hazel Bowen, GWI Vice President Advocacy and Education and SAAWG Convenor of International Relations (CIR) and Siwe Coka-Madwayi member of SAAWG's Cape Town Branch and SAAWG's National President



Hazel Bowen, GWI Vice President Advocacy and Education and SAAWG CIR

“Through the drought situation in South Africa and particularly Cape Town, South Africans have come to realise that access to water is a very broad and far reaching topic. This is not restricted to impoverished or rural communities. Urban areas are very vulnerable. We also realised that the issue is global and also affects areas which appear to have good rainfalls.

Therefore, it is vital that there is a change in mindset regarding the use of water, wherever one might be living. Careful and sustainable use of water will become even more important in the near future. Our seas and rivers need to be protected; sewerage and waste should not be pumped into the sea, just because the sea is there. A holistic approach to water management and water quality needs to be implemented. Judicious use of modern technology can ensure that we continue to have access to clean water.

The issue of access to water is very pertinent to women and girls. In many areas women and girls are tasked with the collection of water. Collection should be as easy as possible, if water cannot be available within each household. Water is essential in all regards of health for the family. Another aspect relates to sanitary hygiene for women and girls. It has become very well known that girls have missed out on schooling and other activities because of the lack of adequate provisions in this regard.

Young children have lost their lives because of unsafe, pit toilet provision. State and community policies and practices are required to ensure that rivers and the seas are properly cared for, ensuring healthy living for all”.

“South Africa is experiencing water scarcity in five provinces, Kwazulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, North West and Northern Cape”, says Siwe Coka-Madwayi member of SAAWG's Cape Town Branch and SAAWG's National President. “SAAWG is currently working with the Institute for Land, Poverty and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape” continues Ms. Coka-Madwayi. In collaboration with Professor Moeniba Isaacs, on behalf of the City of Cape Town, Ms. Coka-Madwayi is doing research on the topic of Water Governance and its gendered aspects when access to water is compromised.



Siwe Coka-Madwayi member of SAAWG's Cape Town Branch and SAAWG's National President

Ms. Coka-Madwayi holds a BAdmin (Hons) Diploma in Poverty, Land Agrarian Studies, from the University of the Western Cape, a MPHIL degree in Agrarian studies, University of Free State. Siwe has been involved in a number of fields, most notably as a Human Development Consult. She is the Founder Director of Inkanyezi Foundation which focuses on an Empowerment and Transformative Programme for community women and girls. The programme has been working with young girls in six Cape Town townships (Khayelitsha, Dunoon, Delft, Kraaifontein, Grabouw and Valhalla Park) amongst other activities.