

Celebrating World Water Day 2019: Water for All

By Linda F. Golodner

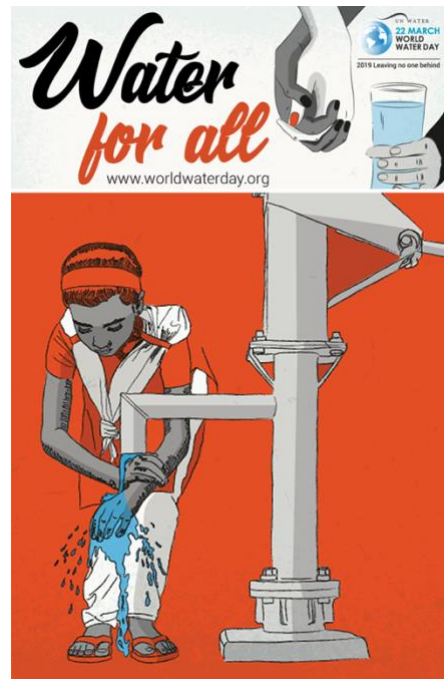
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As we have done for the past several years, the WQ&HC highlights the United Nations' (UN) World Water Day, which is held annually on March 22nd and affirms the importance of safe water in our lives. This year's [theme](#), "Water for All: Leaving No One Behind" is fundamentally tied to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 ([SDG 6](#)), "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" by 2030.

SDG 6 has specific [targets and indicators](#) to bring all of us closer to a world where waterborne illnesses are rare and sanitation is safely managed. Targets include achieving access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and an end to open defecation. It also aims to improve water quality by reducing pollution and halving the proportion of untreated wastewater. Notably, a handbook published jointly by the World Health Organization and UNICEF (UN's International Children's Emergency Fund) [recommends use](#) of a chlorine level of at least 0.2 mg/L when evaluating whether drinking water supplies in households or treatment facilities are properly disinfected. To help raise awareness of global water and sanitation conditions and to support progress on SDG 6, the World Water Day website includes extensive [stories](#), [resources](#), and opportunities for sharing through [social media](#).

Safe Water for All

[In 2010, the UN recognized](#) "the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights." [Safe water](#) means a safely managed drinking water service that is accessible on the premises, available when needed, and free from contamination for personal and domestic use such as drinking, clothes washing, food preparation, and personal and household hygiene. But billions of people live without reliable access to safe water in their homes, schools, farms, and workplaces, making each day a struggle to survive and thrive (see box). These barriers to safe water can be traced to a variety of global and regional conditions, such as population growth, poverty, and migration; environmental degradation; and conflict and forced displacement.



Making a Difference

Access to safe water is essential to global public health and prosperity for all. Yet, to provide safe water globally is a [major challenge](#). It is especially important to help those who have been the subject of discrimination, often based on sex and gender; race, ethnicity, religion, language, and nationality; disability, age, and health status; and property, residence, economic, and social status. These are people who are marginalized, ignored, or forgotten, and need help the most as they struggle to obtain safe water. It is important that all voices are heard when decisions are made and regulations and laws are implemented to improve quality of life.

Some [Facts](#) about Global Water and Sanitation

- 2.1 billion people live without safe water at home
- One in four primary schools have no drinking water service
- 1.8 billion people use an unimproved source of drinking water with no protection from feces contamination
- More than 700 children under five years of age die every day from diarrhea linked to unsafe water and sanitation
- Globally, 80% of the people who have to use unsafe and unprotected water sources live in rural areas
- Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households with off-site drinking water
- About 4 billion people—nearly two-thirds of the global population—experience severe water scarcity during at least one month each year
- Wealthy communities generally receive high levels of water and sanitation services at (often very) low cost compared to poor communities who pay a much higher price for similar or lesser services

Of course, one can always think globally and act locally by observing World Water Day through social media sharing or by gathering together to share ideas. These types of digital and personal connections could help raise awareness about the billions of people around the world living without safe water—something most of us in the United States can (and usually do) take for granted with the turn of a tap or flush of the toilet.

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www.waterandhealth.org