June 20, 2012

Dear Members of Congress:

We urge your support of **HR 3658, the *Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2012***, as the chief executives of US-based non-governmental organizations working to advance international development, global health, environmental protection, and humanitarian crisis response. HR 3658, like its companion S.641, has strong bipartisan support, does not seek new funds, and builds on decades of successful US-led programs to make even better use of existing resources. This is the year to ensure that the bill becomes law.

The organizations we lead are critical partners to the United States government and others worldwide in meeting the needs for poor and disenfranchised people, and protecting the resources they need to survive. Safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are among the most basic needs a person can have.

The lack of access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene contribute to diarrheal diseases, the second leading killer of children under five in the world, while poor hygiene contributes to pnuemonia, the leading cause of death for children. WASH aids in our **collective efforts to ensure all children can succeed in primary school, to advance food security and nutrition, to promote sustainable water resource management, and to reduce poverty**. This is because WASH access reduces the need to spend hours a day on household chores that yield limited supplies, freeing women and girls up to get an education, grow healthy food, and work, and increases the information available to aid families in meeting their own needs.

The range of organizations endorsing this legislation demonstrates the many positive impacts of WASH. We are organizations focused on health, environmental and freshwater conservation, child survival, gender equality, and other issues. We have two things in common: we work together with governments and private sector partners worldwide to improve lives everywhere, and we agree that our goals cannot be accomplished without WASH.

Water for the World makes strategic reforms to existing WASH programs, including:

- **Increasing coordination of WASH** with other programs, to address safe drinking water, sanitation, water resource management, and the linkages highlighted above, and ensure the greatest impact with existing funds;
- **Improving targeting of WASH funding**, recognizing that the poorest people stand to benefit most from receiving access to these services;
- **Enhancing USAID and Department of State capacity** at headquarters, through *existing* offices and positions, and at mission levels, to improve partnerships and technical capacity of in-country implementers and national governments, so that

country leadership in planning, implementing and evaluating WASH programs can be prioritized;

- **Supporting research and regional partnerships** to continue our learning and support innovative and effective solutions; and
- **Sharing the financial burden** with private foundations, research institutions, and other non-federal sources so the US can leverage more change for the same investment.

WASH is among the most efficient investments we can make in reducing poverty around the world: **for every $1 invested, $8 are returned** in saved health care costs and increased economic productivity. Studies show that a lack of WASH access in sub-Saharan Africa **costs the region 5% of its GDP, or $47.7 billion in 2009 alone—more than all international aid delivered to the region.** Because it builds on the *Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005*, the *Water for the World Act of 2012* is a cost-free approach to benefiting families, communities, and even the global economy.

We urge you to contact Luke Murry in Congressman Poe's office or Michael Harold in Congressman Blumenauer's office today to join HR3658 as a co-sponsor.

More importantly, **we ask you to call on the House Foreign Affairs Committee to move the bill, and for the full House to pass it urgently**.

Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

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Washington, DC

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Atlanta, GA

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