



## Global Food & Water Scarcity and ONE's Policy Plan

In a world as prosperous as ours, it is profoundly disturbing that more than a billion people do not have access to clean water and 2.6 billion to basic sanitation. Over 850 million people in the world will go hungry today. These are basic needs that many of us are fortunate enough to take for granted, but the lack of these basic needs stunts developing countries' ability to make any improvements to health, education or economic development and can fuel existing tensions among vulnerable groups.

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### Evidence for Action

**Enormous health impact:** The number of chronically hungry people worldwide is growing by an average of four million per year at current trends. Unsafe water and a lack of basic sanitation are estimated to claim the lives of more than 1.8 million children under five years old from diarrhea every year. At any given time, close to half the people in the developing world are suffering from at least one of the main diseases associated with inadequate water and sanitation. All too common in the developing world, malnourishment among pregnant women results in the death of newborn children and future health consequences.

**Great return on investment:** In 2004, a group of the world's leading economic experts ranked water supply and sanitation projects among the top ten most cost-effective ways to advance global welfare. A WHO cost-benefit analysis calculated that every \$1 invested in water and sanitation yields an average economic return of \$8 in saved-time, increased productivity and reduced health costs.

**Opens the doors of development:** Access to water, sanitation and an adequate food supply improves health, increases attendance at schools, and improves economic prosperity. Studies show that children are 12% more likely to attend school if water is available within 15 minutes rather than one hour's walk. In some parts of Africa, women expend as much as 85% of their daily energy intake on getting water.

**Improve agricultural productivity for long-term sustainability:** The best way to fight hunger is to build the capacity of communities to meet their own nutritional needs. No major region around the world has been able to make sustained economic gains without first making significant improvements in agricultural productivity. Sub-Saharan Africa, which contains 16 of the 18 most undernourished countries in the world, remains the only region where per-capita food production continues to worsen year by year.

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### Water and Hunger: The Precursors to Development

The United States has the knowledge and resources to help relieve water scarcity and hunger challenges around the world, but we have not yet made this a priority. Though the United States spent \$1 billion on water and sanitation in 2005, more than \$700 million of this total was for Iraq.

Estimates are that an additional \$4 billion investment is needed each year in development funding for water and sanitation. The United States should provide a proportionate share of this global need to improve water and sanitation and should also work to improve food aid effectiveness while making more substantial investments in agricultural productivity. On water and sanitation, our commitment should include: essential infrastructure for nationwide and regional water and sanitation systems with a focus on strategically placed water access points such as at schools or health facilities. In order to address food needs, the United States should make food assistance more flexible, allowing aid recipients to buy food in local and regional markets when possible. The United States should additionally invest more heavily in helping enhance developing countries' agricultural productivity so that they can locally produce enough food to provide a sustainable supply for themselves.