



Women carrying pitchers of water in India. Photo: Andre Fanthome

THE USAID AND GAP INC. WOMEN + WATER ALLIANCE

CONTEXT

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Gap Inc. share a common interest in improving the health and well-being of the women, families, and communities touched by the global apparel industry through improved water, sanitation, and hygiene services, and responsibly managing water resources.

Worldwide, the apparel industry provides a critical source of economic opportunity for women, who make up approximately 80 percent of garment workers. However, the industry also stands out as one of the largest and most intensive users of water; responsible for roughly one-fifth of freshwater pollution globally. For example, manufacturing processes such as dyeing and finishing garments are sometimes poorly regulated and can result in impacts to surrounding community water resources, with women and children bearing the brunt of the downstream impacts.

Many of the countries where apparel production is based also face underlying challenges in meeting the health, economic, and natural resource management needs of their populations. A significant factor that contributes to women's disadvantages in many of these countries is the disproportionate burden that women bear for household responsibilities, particularly related to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). Women and girls collectively spend more than 150 million hours collecting water and face serious health risks due to inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, and poor understanding of healthy hygiene practices. Addressing these issues provides an opportunity to strengthen women's lives.

THE WOMEN + WATER ALLIANCE

USAID and Gap Inc. aim to draw upon their complementary strengths to improve the health and wellbeing of women, families, and communities in countries of shared interest, starting in India. These strengths include USAID's technical expertise, strong bilateral relationships, and program investments at the community level, which will complement Gap Inc.'s experience in implementing its life-skills training program — Personal Advancement & Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E.) — and sustainability efforts across its global supply chain. Together, through this Alliance, USAID and Gap Inc. seek to ensure the sustained and scalable impact of WASH programming and advancement of women.

The goal of the five year Women + Water Global Development Alliance is to improve and sustain the health and well-being of women and communities touched by the apparel industry. This goal will be supported by three objectives:

- Advance women's self-efficacy and agency through P.A.C.E.
- Accelerate women's access to sustainable WASH services
- Aggregate stakeholders to improve water supply and sanitation financing availability and management of community water resources

To further the impact and extend the reach of the partnership, USAID and Gap Inc. will actively share information, collaborate, and build partnerships across and beyond the apparel sector.

APPROACH

The Women + Water Alliance seeks to create impact by leveraging the following approaches:

- A **systems-based approach** which understands that a variety of interdependent factors can determine the behaviors of individuals and recognizes that changes at the individual, organizational, community, and systems levels are often needed to sustainably improve the lives of women, their families, and their communities
- A **gender-sensitive approach** that recognizes the pivotal role that women play in society and their unique needs and opportunities while engaging both men and women
- An **adaptive and flexible approach** that will enable the program to learn while doing, and adjust as the program evolves

PARTNERS

Implementing partners include: Water.org, CARE, Institute for Sustainable Communities, and International Center for Research on Women.

