

The World Walks for Water and Sanitation 2015

Evaluation report

World Water Day is celebrated every year on March 22, and for the last four years, hundreds of thousands of people across the world have mobilised to Walk for Water and Sanitation. Activists, schoolchildren and communities from Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia have taken to the streets to demand that their [human right to water and sanitation](#) is fulfilled so that they can have the clean running water and safe, hygienic sanitation they need to live the lives they choose. The [World Walks for Water and Sanitation](#) is the largest worldwide mobilisation for universal access to water and sanitation and, as such, provides an excellent opportunity for communities to lobby governments to meet the demands of this global campaign.



2015 activities

In March of 2015, the World Walks for Water and Sanitation campaign aimed to increase awareness of the need for water and sanitation for all, with walkers submitting their collective demands to decision-makers, in order to achieve progressive policy change. The Walks are one of a range of key activities carried out under the [Keep Your Promises](#) campaign, led by the End Water Poverty (EWP) coalition. These actions aim at calling on decision-makers to uphold their commitments to recognise and realise the fundamental human right to water and sanitation.

This evaluation is to bring together highlights from around the world in achieving these aims. It also shares feedback on the mobilisation activities undertaken this year, all of which will help us to further develop plans to mark World Water Day successfully in 2016, and reaching out even more.

Key statistics

- Over 455,000 people walked, with events taking place in 35 countries around the world.
- The largest numbers of individuals uniting for walks were held in the Democratic Republic of Congo with 201,000 people, in Belgium with 137,000 people, and in Pakistan, with over 15,000 people.
- Pakistan also had the largest number of walks per country, with over 33 events, while Ireland held over 30 activities, and India held over 26.
- The End Water Poverty Secretariat received over 300 photos from events and activities around the world –the most ever!



Key political action and results

Many EWP members secured high-level meetings with national and local decision-makers. This was an excellent development in 2015, providing tangible political impact element to the Walks that is a very important result for the overall campaign. Below are a few examples of worldwide advocacy around the World Walks for Water and Sanitation:

- In Zambia, Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN) secured a high-level meeting with leaders of Luapula Province in which specific monetised commitments were made to improve WASH throughout the Province. They were also able to achieve government commitment to support and realise the human right to water and sanitation.
- In Bangladesh, FANSA and VERC were the first ever civil society organisations campaigning on WASH in Dhaka's slums. They worked with slum-dwellers to discuss local WASH issues and took their demands to slum duty bearers and city water authorities.
- In Liberia, WASH Network gave the government 90 days to establish a WASH Commission – a committed that was agreed to at the Liberia WASH Compact in 2011, but as yet, has not been implemented.
- In Ghana, CONIWAS petitioned the Parliament of Ghana on the need to realise the human right to water and sanitation.
- In Pakistan, members in Khairpur demanded the immediate preparation of provincial safe drinking water and sanitation policies, following previous delays. Elsewhere, politicians were encouraged to include water and sanitation issues in manifestos for the upcoming May provincial election. Locals were also encouraged to vote with WASH concerns in mind.
- In Guinea, organisation Carbone pressed the Energy and Water Minister of the government on the right to WASH.
- In Nigeria, CHRIFACAF made a breakthrough in Imo State, by meeting state officials for the first time, who assured them of the Governor's commitment to the realisation of the human right to water and sanitation.
- Walkers from a number of Indian coalition members mobilised together and contributed to the All-India Convention on WASH. They pressed leaders on the importance of water and sanitation as a social good, on the need for increased community involvement, and adequate budgeting for access to WASH services through Swachh Bharat Mission.
- In Sierra Leone, WASH-Net put pressure on the government to establish a Parliamentary Action Group on Water for Sustainable Development in the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak. The group was launched on 26 March, 2015; an important step in action against Ebola and in promoting and ensuring access to safe, adequate water and sanitation.
- In Mexico, FANMEX took to the streets to hold the Mexican government to account for legislating in a manner contrary to the principles of human rights and ignoring international agreements.



Media coverage

Public activities were prominent this year, and were very well documented and shared on social media, helping to grow a prominent social media presence and an increased following. Early in the campaign, key messages were shared online through photographic memes, to help share the word and promote the campaign. Later, these were augmented by stories and photos from the worldwide mobilisations to showcase the truly united and global nature of this campaign. The prominent use of social media platforms, particularly focusing on Twitter and Facebook, was a great way to engage members and supports and unite people in the cause. The online presence was complemented by additional press materials and releases, which were adapted to their local contexts and issues, helping to make the global issues relevant at local levels. The collection and publication of a range of stories highlighting important human rights themes and issues related to water and sanitation also helped to boost and support the campaign. Highlights included:

- The campaign had a reach of 893,000 on Twitter, with over 1,100 retweets achieved. 500 new followers joined on Twitter to show their support.
- There was high level of engagement on Twitter from influential players including: UN Water, UNU-WIDER, World Hygiene Programme, Green Cross International, 2030 Water Resources Group, Action/2015 and Widescope, as well as media outlets, such as Socialfy, Africa Green Media, CSRWire and SpyGhana.
- The most engaging and active tweets featured quality photographs of events, while human rights memes and messages proved most popular.
- World Walks achieved a reach of 258,000 people on Facebook, with page 'likes' increasing by 134. The most engaging content on Facebook were also posts including photos from events, or highlighted stories that reinforced the reasons for mobilising.
- Seven blogs on the EWP site emphasised different, country-specific angles on the right to water and sanitation, highlighting in detail member activities and needs on WASH issues.
- Mobilisations and events were featured in many national and local media outlets, with the highest coverage being in Spain, Chile, Kenya and India. A summary can be found [online](#).
- Campaign supporters were successful in being covered in a number of leading newspapers, including the *Irish Mirror*, *The Standard* in Kenya, *L'express Guinee* and *Europa Press, Spain*. A comment piece on [WASH in Nigeria](#) syndicated via Inter-Press Service was shared just under 900 times.
- To date, the EWP [animation video for the Keep Your Promises](#) campaign has been viewed 1520 times on YouTube. CONIWAS, of Ghana, uploaded a [video of their campaign event and walk](#) to YouTube, which was also featured in the Third Sector email newsletter, which has a high following, helping to spread the word about the campaign and gain further followers.



Successes

- Very high numbers of walkers, along with a high rate of registrations of walk events and activities. This is an affirmation that the campaign captures people's imagination and remains very relevant worldwide.
- Walks and supporting activities to highlight the issues were held across all regions, making this a truly global campaign.
- Increased visibility of key human rights messages, and a united call for the realisation of the human right to water and sanitation was achieved.
- Rise in use of photography and the sharing of images, particularly online was successful.
- Increase in leading organisations outside of the coalition engaged in the campaign through media activities. These included from action/2015, WASH Advocates, and Oxfam Intermon (Spain).
- Good examples of bottom-up work in marginalised communities, with the communities working together to call for change.
- The campaign generated seven World Walks insight pieces on the [EWP blog](#) which were well received, with one being published through an external news source.

Areas for future improvement

- Measuring long-term impact of political advocacy will be a difficult, but necessary task.
- Low quality video footage of events, which meant the videos were only used as sharable content on social media, but not as quality content.
- Streamlined and clear social media engagement, as there was some confusion from walkers over which Twitter account to communicate with.
- Improved audience engagement on World Walks newsletters, as there were limited open and click rates in 2015.
- Increased focus on engagement and messaging around the Sustainable Development Goals, as this remained low, despite their increasing importance.
- Few 'bottom-up' community advocacy initiatives in 2015, which should be a priority focus in future.
- Focus on getting members to increasingly localise and adapt messaging creatively to their contexts, as these can help in engaging media and stakeholders beyond traditional advocacy forums.



Survey feedback to be taken into account in 2016

- Cost, and limited resources, were registered as the main prohibitive factors in organising walks and advocacy, followed by the amount of organisation and time required, and a lack of political change resulting as a consequence.
- Greater resources would enable members and supports to reach broader community groups with core messages and actions.
- Overall, members were satisfied with the campaign materials available, which were made available free for download from the website in English, French and Spanish.
- Success is that the vast majority of respondents plan to build on their campaigns after the walks themselves, meaning the Walks now are a part of their overall advocacy campaigns.
- EWP is very happy that the majority of groups would take part again in 2016.

Recommendations for the future

- Focus on the quality of events and their longer-term impact, rather than simple numbers of walkers. Along with this, more groups should move beyond top-line meetings and symposiums, to focus more on community-led change around World Water Day, such as in the case of the work done in the slums of Dhaka. However to realise this, further thought of how to support such action and establish local partnerships and working may be needed to achieve this.
- An online sign-up could include a pledge or petition to make a firmer ask and call for change to help further the cause and stimulate political action, while helping to capture people's imagination and raise awareness of the extent of the water crisis.
- EWP could set up a system of monitoring progress of political action beyond initial mobilisations, to better assess long term impact and change.
- Remove World Walks Twitter account to avoid confusion, as having two feeds divided the audience.
- Due to the success of the longer form comment pieces written about the campaign, it is recommended that EWP prepare and promote more national-level pieces, using strong statistics and news angles. This was evident in the success of the Inter Press Services' article on Nigeria. These could then be pitched and targeted to international media in advance of World Water Day, to help promote the campaign and its core messages.
- Identify and nurture a group of bloggers, made up of good writers, or those looking to develop writing skills, from around the world to cover stories and highlight issues.
- Create case studies of successful campaigns (political or creative) to be used to stimulate ideas among members, provide evidence of the importance of the campaign, and help encourage a truly global presence.
- Planning and launching the campaign should take place well in advance of the date, as well as increased use of 'stunts', the media and other online platforms to promote the campaign ahead of time. All of these are recommended to help build momentum and get increased support.



Thank you!

Thank you to all End Water Poverty members, supporters and partners who supported this year's World Walks for Water and Sanitation. Through your great work, you have helped raise awareness and strengthen the global call to end water poverty and for the realisation of the human right to water and sanitation for all.

We look forward to making 2016 actions even bigger!

Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

Stay up-to-date about 2016 plans on our website:

<http://www.worldwalksforwater.org/>

