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Initiative Aims To Help Millions in Africa Access Clean Water

First lady Laura Bush announces "PlayPumps" private-public partnership

By Kathryn McConnell
Washington File Staff Writer

[South African boy](#)

A boy in South Africa drinks clean water from a communal faucet. (USAID photo)

Washington -- The United States is partnering with two major nonprofit organizations to help bring clean drinking water to millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

In announcing the public-private partnership September 20 in New York, first lady Laura Bush called for other partners to join the effort to help up to 10 million people access safe water by 2010 through the installation of 4,000 pumps in schools and communities.

Bush spoke at the annual meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative, held in conjunction with the opening of the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly. Joining Bush at the launch of the initiative were leaders of the two partner organizations, Case Foundation and the MCJ Foundation.

The United States is committing \$10 million toward a goal of \$60 million to fund the initiative, called the PlayPumps Alliance, Bush said. The alliance will connect playground "merry-go-rounds" to water pumps and storage tanks, using the energy of children's play to turn pump wheels and bring clean water above ground.

Bush said access to clean water is essential to both health and education. Without clean water, she said, people suffering from HIV and AIDS cannot take needed medications safely and their weak immune systems are exposed to water-borne illnesses. Also, water-related illnesses keep children from attending school. In particular, the daily task of finding clean water for households, usually assigned to women and girls, keeps girls out of classrooms, she said.

PlayPumps is the latest example of partnerships involving U.S. support for sustainable international development and for addressing the problems of poverty, lack of education and pandemic disease, Bush said.

One example, she said, is the President's Malaria Initiative, launched in June 2005. By the end of September, the initiative will have reached approximately 6 million Africans through national malaria control programs, she said. (See [related article](#).)




Another is the Mothers-to-Mothers project in South Africa, funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. The project helps HIV-infected pregnant women receive support to keep their unborn children HIV-free. (See [related article](#).)

"Through the generosity of governments, contributions from the private sector and the leadership of the governments of developing countries, "we can succeed in helping people everywhere build a healthier, more prosperous and more hopeful world for their children," Bush said.

The Clinton Global Initiative is a nonprofit project funded by a foundation established by former President Bill Clinton.

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