India leads the world in deaths of children under the age of five (United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality), contributing to 22% of the world’s child deaths (UNICEF). Premier causes of such deaths include diarrhea and malnutrition.

One may draw a straight line to the parallel fact that India is home to the most people in the world living without access to improved sanitation (814 million). It is the second in the world for lack of access to improved drinking water (97 million). (UNICEF)

Such deficits of improved water and sanitation are key causes for the prevalence of childhood diarrhea in India, as well as a hidden precursor for malnutrition, due to the resulting spread of parasites that prevent the absorption of nutrients. Exacerbating diarrhea-induced child mortality is the lack of simple medical interventions, such as the provision of oral rehydration salts.

The Global Interfaith WASH Alliance is harnessing the power of religion, combined with proven educational techniques and eco-friendly sanitation facilities, to combat these disturbing trends.

GIWA India’s coalition includes: the All India Organisation of Imams of Mosques (representing 500,000 Muslim faith leaders), Sarva Dharma Sansad (representing the leaders of India’s many faiths), Ganga Action Parivar (India’s premier interfaith environmental NGO), top leaders of the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Baha’i, Jain, Jewish and Christian communities, representatives of India’s business sectors, and more.

Teaching the Principles of WASH:
“With almost 5 billion people belonging to religious communities, their leaders’ potential for action is substantial. From the smallest village to the largest city…religious communities offer large networks for the care and protection of children” (UNICEF) GIWA India will be the largest faith-based initiative in history to harness the strengths of religious communities and their leaders in order to motivate and enable people to live according to the principles of WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene). They will do so through a combination of proven techniques, such as Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), which will be augmented by teachings from the scriptures of their faiths, and the words of their religious leaders.

Providing Eco-Friendly Sanitation:
Communities will be enabled to establish non-polluting sanitation facilities, such as those based on biodigester technology. Such biotoilets naturally convert all waste into...
A Hidden Dilemma: 24% of India’s girls will drop out of school before they reach puberty. Many of them will do so simply because they lack the privacy and safety that enclosed toilet facilities provide. When they become mothers themselves, their children may be more prone to illness and death due to maternal illiteracy. Additionally, expectant mothers who have no access to private toilet facilities are more prone towards contracting infections and undergoing other prenatal complications. This is because many, out of modesty and safety concerns, painfully (and unhealthily) wait until the dead of night to heed nature’s call.

1. clear, pathogen-free effluents, which can serve as an excellent fertilizer, as well as 2. biofuel, which can be harnessed to power generators, provide cooking fuel, heat homes, and more.

**Keeping Girls in School through Sanitation:**
The lack of a mother’s access to primary education has been cited as a direct reason behind raised instances of childhood disease and death. Because many girls in India drop out of school simply because they lack the privacy that enclosed toilet facilities offer, schools will be specifically targeted for the provision of privacy-protecting biotoilet facilities. In addition, students will learn about water conservation alongside powerful lessons in proper sanitation and hygiene through specially-produced, culturally relevant curriculum.

**Rebuilding Disaster Zones Under the Principles of WASH**
All too often in India, provisions such as toilet facilities become of secondary importance to the rapid reconstruction of housing destroyed by natural calamities. GIWA India is working alongside Project Hope and Ganga Action Parivar in the disaster-torn Himalayas of Uttarakhand, India, to rebuild entire villages that are in harmony with the principles of WASH. This will include the training of communities in CLTS, alongside the provision of biotoilets, fresh water systems, rainwater harvesting facilities, water-saving agricultural resources, and environmental awareness education that is specifically designed to motivate residents to protect their aquifers.

**WASH-Based Health Training for Women, Midwives, Disaster Responders, and Community Health Workers:** Special training will be provided in water, hygiene and sanitation-based interventions that are designed to keep mothers and their children alive and healthy. In so doing, they will learn subjects including the importance of sterilization, hand washing, the use of toilets, and the dissemination of oral rehydration salts for the treatment of diarrhea.