

Access to Clean Water for Children and Women in the Global South!

A Statement by Joseph Masembe Tema Leader of Uganda's Little Hands Go Green and East African collaborating partner of A Green and Better World Cameroon.

Access to clean water remains a critical challenge in the Global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where rapid population growth, rural-urban migration, and climate change exacerbate existing water shortages. Women and children are disproportionately affected, as they are often responsible for fetching water, sometimes walking long distances to access unsafe sources. The lack of clean water not only endangers their health but also limits educational and economic opportunities, reinforcing cycles of poverty.

Rapid population growth increases the demand for already scarce water resources. Many cities in sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing unprecedented urbanization, straining existing water supply systems. Informal settlements often lack proper water infrastructure, forcing residents to rely on contaminated sources. Meanwhile, in rural areas, inadequate investment in water infrastructure leaves many communities without safe drinking water, exposing them to waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea, which are among the leading causes of child mortality.

Women and girls bear the burden of water collection, often spending hours each day fetching water instead of attending school or engaging in productive activities. This daily struggle affects their health and overall well-being, as they face risks of violence and injury during their journeys. Furthermore, poor access to clean water impacts maternal and infant health, as safe water is essential for hygiene during childbirth and postnatal care.

To build resilient and healthy communities, investment in sustainable water solutions is essential. Governments, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders must collaborate to expand water infrastructure, implement water conservation strategies, and promote innovative solutions such as rainwater harvesting and solar-powered water purification systems. Policies should prioritize equitable water access, particularly for marginalized rural populations and urban informal settlements.

Community engagement and education are equally important. Teaching communities about water conservation, hygiene, and sanitation can significantly reduce health risks.

Empowering women and involving them in water management decisions can also enhance sustainable solutions.

Ensuring universal access to clean water is not just a fundamental human right but a prerequisite for sustainable development, improved health, and economic empowerment in the Global South. Addressing this challenge will help create resilient communities where children can thrive, and women can lead healthier, more productive lives.