



PRESS RELEASE
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Four-year partnership brings water, sanitation and hygiene to underserved communities in Mali



March 11, 2021 (New York, NY)—Today marks the launch of a four-year partnership between the One Drop Foundation, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and WaterAid, to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene for thousands of people in Mali.

Called “Beseya Blon” (A space for hygiene), the project will reach 36,500 people with access to clean water; 47,000 people with access to basic sanitation; and 36,000 people with improved hygiene in communities and healthcare facilities.

The Beseya Blon project will support strengthened WASH systems, hygiene behavior change, improved accountability, and effective citizens’ engagement in collaboration with government and local partners. The intervention strategy relies on healthcare facilities as entry points into communities.

COVID-19 highlights the importance of hygiene and frequent handwashing to prevent the spread of disease. When the pandemic broke out, the Beseya Blon [partners quickly developed and implemented a response plan](#) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene in Mali. In 2020, the program supported communities with hygiene kits to healthcare facilities and by training healthcare staff and communities about how to prevent infection.

In addition to improving access to sustainable and inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene services in the Circle of Bla (Segou Region) and Kati (Koulikoro Region), the project will use

One Drop's *Social Art for Behaviour Change*™ approach to promote healthy hygiene habits. This proven method is applied in collaboration with local change leaders and uses local theatre troupes, games and other social arts to encourage the widespread adoption of good hygiene practices, such as handwashing with water and soap.

As more people gain access to water, sanitation and hygiene, the project will support communities and local leaders in demanding their right to these services. Project partners will work with the local and national government to invest in and prioritize water and sanitation and to address the social and cultural barriers that hinder equitable and inclusive access. This includes strengthening local accountability mechanisms to ensure that services are properly managed and maintained over time.

Jean-Louis Dufresne, CEO of the One Drop Foundation, said:

“Our foundation was created in 2007, and since then, we have learned that working towards behaviour change related to water, sanitation and hygiene is the key to ensuring the sustainability of our water access interventions. This is what we do through our unique Social Art for Behaviour Change approach. And then we must go even further, to work on developing income-generating activities, to help certain social norms to evolve, and to encourage communities to adopt participatory and inclusive governance practices.”

Peter Laugharn, President and CEO of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, said:

“We believe that we are all stronger together, so we seek to leverage our collective resources to improve sustainable and resilient WASH services in healthcare facilities, schools, and communities. The Beyesa Blon program is a shining example of how to advance WASH in health care facilities. The approach has been replicated in Niger and successes have been adopted within our wider global portfolio, and we are looking forward to the launch of the next phase.”

Kelly Parsons, CEO of WaterAid America, said:

"Our work with One Drop and the Hilton Foundation has become a blueprint for countries around the world on best practices, collaboration and accountability. Through dedication and persistence, we are achieving lasting change and scaling our impact to reach the most vulnerable communities through access to water, sanitation and hygiene."

In Mali, nearly one in three people does not have access to clean water and 69 percent—11.3 million people—do not have access to a toilet. Nearly half of Mali's schools and 61 percent of healthcare facilities do not have clean water. This holds back progress and causes illness and even death. In Mali, more than 4,000 children under five die every year from diarrhea caused by dirty water and poor sanitation.

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Download photos representing WaterAid's previous work in Mali with The One Drop Foundation and Hilton Foundation, including the Ji Ni Beseya program:

<https://wateraid.assetbank-server.com/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/fd400d0a-cea8-4b26-86d6-dab439acee53/assetbox.html>

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About the One Drop Foundation

The One Drop Foundation is an international foundation created by Cirque du Soleil and Lune Rouge founder Guy Laliberté with the vision of a better world, where all have access to living conditions that allow empowerment and development. Our mission is to ensure sustainable access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene for some of the most vulnerable communities through innovative partnerships, creativity and the power of art. Together with its partners, the One Drop Foundation deploys its unique *Social Art for Behaviour Change*™ approach designed to sustainably foster the adoption of healthy water, sanitation and hygiene related behaviors and empower communities. For this to be possible, the One Drop Foundation creates novel fundraising initiatives supported by a visionary community of partners and donors. The One Drop Foundation counts over 13 years of turning water into action, with projects that will soon have improved the living conditions of over 2.1 million people around the world. To learn more about the One Drop Foundation, visit www.onedrop.org.

About The Hilton Foundation

International hotelier Conrad N. Hilton established the grantmaking foundation that bears his name in 1944 to help people living in poverty and experiencing disadvantage worldwide. Today, the work continues, concentrating on efforts to improve early childhood development outcomes, support older youth as they transition from foster care, ensure opportunity youth can access career pathways, prevent homelessness, identify solutions to safe water access, help integrate refugees into society and lift the work of Catholic sisters. Additionally, following selection by an independent, international jury, the Foundation annually awards the \$2.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize to an organization doing extraordinary work to reduce human suffering. The Foundation is one of the world's largest, with assets recently growing to approximately \$7.5 billion. It has awarded grants to date totaling more than \$2 billion, \$207 million worldwide in 2020. Please visit www.hiltonfoundation.org for more information.

About WaterAid

WaterAid has worked in Mali for more than 20 years to provide sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services to the most vulnerable populations and to advocate, improve governance, coordination, planning, monitoring, financing and accountability for the human right to clean water. The international nonprofit works in 28 countries to change the lives of the poorest and most marginalized people. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 27 million people with clean water and 27 million people with decent toilets. For more information, visit www.wateraid.org.