

*The following was written for the ONE.org blog in May 2007. Accessed 24 October 2013.  
<http://www.one.org/us/2007/05/21/friday-night-water-rights/>*

### **Friday Night (Water) Rights**

It was a beautiful Friday evening in Chicago with much of the town's attention turned to their favorite baseball team in the first "cross-town rivalry" of the season (Cubbies won!). But ONE and World Vision supporters decided instead to show their support for more than one billion people in the world that don't have access to clean water and sanitation. Senator Dick Durbin, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, Consul General for South Africa Yusuf Omar, World Vision water expert Emmanuel Oppong, and ONE volunteer Morgan Granata all shared their experiences working toward combating the problem of lack of clean water and working toward ending extreme poverty. Meanwhile, volunteers collected signatures from the crowd to show their support of fully funding the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act.

"There is a battle going on in the hearts and minds of the people in the world and it comes down to this, 'Who are these Americans?'" began Senator Durbin, who spoke of his trips to developing countries and the need for more programs which empower women, promote micro-finance opportunities, and provide clean water – projects that all go toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The senator also praised ONE, World Vision and other humanitarian organizations for their education programs domestically, because rallies like this one held in Chicago, "define who we really are" as Americans.

Congresswoman Schakowsky spoke of the legacy of the late Senator Paul Simon on water issues, both domestically and internationally, and how the growing crisis spurred her to action on this important issue. The congresswoman recently joined with several of her colleagues calling for more funding on this important issue. Consul General Omar and Mr. Oppong brought the crowd a more personal perspective on the issues, sharing what was like growing up in a country affected by extreme poverty and how support of the global community is necessary to ending this injustice.

Finally, Ms. Granata shared her experiences as a ONE volunteer and how getting involved with the anti-poverty movement has changed every aspect of her life from walking her two young boys to school and caring for her elderly grandfather. She ended by encouraging people to be true American heroes and stand up on these important issues!

By the end of the rally, the volunteers had collected more than 230 signatures on the petition to call for full funding of the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act which will be delivered to Congress this week – showing Congress and the world that they aren't going sit by and watch this growing crisis anymore!

*The following was written for the ONE.org blog in June 2008. Accessed 9 October 2013.  
<http://www.one.org/us/2008/06/16/securing-our-future-not-just-a-talking-point/>*

### **Securing our Future – not just a talking point**

When I was in high school, every April the principal would get on the PA and give his annual speech about "rams butting heads" – which was his way of telling the boys to keep their tempers under control. Fights always seemed to peak in the springtime. Fifteen years after I first heard the speech, I found myself living in the Balkans. The speech would always be in the back of my head when I spoke with my colleagues about how we hoped for a late winter thaw to minimize the potential for springtime fighting. Today, I find myself in Afghanistan.

Right after I arrived – just around the time that Josh Peck started sending emails about the global food crisis and ONE members could help – the demonstrations began in Afghanistan about the skyrocketing food prices. At the time, I was admittedly too busy trying to get used to a new job, making new friends, and adjusting to the altitude to do more research about how extreme poverty affects the Afghan people. But over the last couple months, I have talked to more people and a picture has begun to form.

25 years of war. Landlocked country with extreme summers and extreme winters. Low water tables. Dilapidated, bombed out, under-funded, or non-existent schools. Ditto for health clinics. 70% illiteracy rate – as a population – female literacy rates are the lowest in the world. TB. 40% of the population has access to clean water. Malaria. 53% of the population lives below the poverty line. Highest maternal mortality rate in the world. Unexploded land mines. 40% official unemployment. Life expectancy of 43. The opium trade and the resulting crime. Internally displaced persons.

Afghanistan is a country full of vulnerable groups – widows, orphans, victims of war, IDPs, youth, woman. But there is one vulnerable group that doesn't get mentioned enough – military-aged males. Boys who are just becoming men and about to make pivotal decisions about their futures. Do they choose the "straight and narrow" path – full of the struggles outlined above – unemployment, food insecurity, lack of access to health care and education for their families? Or do they choose the "easy" way out and join with one of the criminal and anti-government elements so prevalent through the country?

ONE members know the OV08 tag-line – "Saving lives, securing our future" – but increased funding for international development is not just a talking point. Although I see examples of the positive impacts of international development daily in Kabul, I have been thinking about the "securing our future" portion a lot of the last couple days as international news sources carried stories of the prison break in Kandahar. Many of them began with a phrase like "the summer violence in Afghanistan starts with a bang." Again, I was reminded of my high school principal and his springtime speech. And then I thought of all the military-aged males here who are trying to decide what to do with their futures.

Poverty breeds instability.

As ONE members step up their engagements with presidential candidates this summer and fall – keep these boys in mind when you band the candidates. The "saving lives" part is easy to remember – providing basic medicines, increasing access to education, supplying clean water. But remember that its not just securing Americans' futures. Giving choices to teenage boys is securing everyone's future – so the boys then don't have to resort to "butting heads" every spring to provide for their families.