



Water & Children

By Leslie Hawthorne Klingler

In the United States, we have good reason to expect that our children will grow up healthy. A major reason why we can hope for a good future for our little ones is that we need not second-guess the quality of our water supply. Yet in many regions of the world, water is a silent enemy.

Communities without safe water constantly face serious threats to their children's health:

• Disease

Unsafe water makes children sick. The World Health Organization estimates that 6,000 children die each day from water-related illnesses that most parents in the U.S. have scarcely heard of. These include cholera, dysentery, typhoid, guinea worm, and hepatitis. Any one of these diseases can devastate a community's young population.

One of the most common symptoms of disease is diarrhea. Many children in the developing world live with constant diarrhea caused by water-related illnesses. The young ones are plagued by fatigue and weakened immune systems. It is almost impossible for children with diarrhea or their parents to keep the watery feces from contaminating other people. Disease spreads rapidly.

• Heavy labor

In communities without easy access to water, children are the ones designated to haul it long distances to their homes. Water weighs 8 pounds per gallon, so a child providing a family of four with a sub-Saharan average of 16 gallons per day must carry daily 128 pounds of water. Children must transport this heavy burden from water sources that are up to several miles away.

The heavy labor of carrying water often causes neck and back problems that afflict children their entire lives. Sending children long distances to retrieve water also puts them in danger of accidents and sexual assault.

• Lack of education

Children in communities lacking accessible clean water often miss school. The demands of retrieving water for their families leave little time or energy for studies. In addition, children are often too sick from water-related diseases to go to school, or embarrassing diarrhea keeps them home.

Safe water saves children's lives

Safe water dramatically increases a child's chances of reaching the age of five. It drastically improves a child's health and quality of life. Yet, only half of the children in developing countries have access to this essential resource.

Fortunately, people around the world are recognizing that clean water can prevent childhood suffering and death. Lifewater and other organizations are strengthening their efforts to help people gain access to safe water, and global institutions are joining in the effort. In September 2000, the United Nations (UN) identified access to safe water as a top priority. As part of its Millennium Development Goals, the international body said it will work to reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015.

Progress has been made. According to a UN 2005 update, since 1990 approximately eight percent of the developing world's people received first-time access to clean water. Nonetheless, over one billion people still lack it.

As people around the world act on the conviction that too many children die from preventable diseases, parents in developing countries are defeating one of their worst enemies—unsafe water. Lifewater looks to the day when all communities will celebrate clean water as one of their children's most important sources of life and health.

Below: Too many children die from preventable, water-related disease. Find out how you can get involved www.lifewater.org



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Kids' Compassion Challenges Adults

By Leslie Hawthorne Klingler

Leaders at Grace Bible Church in Arroyo Grande, California, thought that the 300 children attending Vacation Bible School (VBS) could raise \$500. That would be enough for the Sierra Leone Childhelp Water Project to repair a much needed hand pump on a well.

Much to everyone's surprise, the young group raised a total of \$1,370! Because of the children's generosity, Lifewater in partnership with Childhelp in Sierra Leone was able to repair the hand pump and hold a hygiene training.

During the course of the week, VBS leaders were impressed by the children's sacrificial giving. Many kids committed hard-earned money toward the goal of helping children in Sierra Leone. For example:

- Seven-year-old Abi decided to give Lifewater the money she was saving to buy a special doll.
- Three siblings— six-year-old Alyssa, seven-year-old Joshua, and ten-year-old Michaela contributed the money they were raising to buy a new puppy.
- Eleven-year-old Patrick studied Lifewater materials, then wrote a paragraph sharing about Lifewater and asking people to contribute spare change. He distributed the letter to neighbors and his dad's colleagues.

VBS coordinator Carolyn Thom believes that the Lifewater fundraiser was successful because it nurtured the children's developing sense of compassion. She explained,

"A primary goal of the church's children's program has been trying to create in our children a heart of compassion for people in need around them. The Lifewater project helped our kids see that a heart of compassion that begins locally can extend to help people around the world."

When the children raised almost five times more than had ever been raised in previous VBS missions projects, Thom and the rest of the staff felt humbled. "The children gave not because they had to but because they truly wanted to help," said Thom. "The fact that they kept exceeding their goals challenged us, the adult congregation, to follow their example."



Above: Children in Sierra Leone collecting water from unsafe sources before their hand pump was repaired.

Keys to a Successful Children's Missions Project

Grace Bible Church VBS coordinator Carolyn Thom has several suggestions for people coordinating a missions project geared to children:

- 1. Involve a real missionary.** Throughout the course of the week, Lifewater board member Tim Cleath—who has been on numerous Lifewater training trips—taught the kids about safe water and how Lifewater projects help communities obtain the vital resource.
- 2. Help children to see they are helping other children.** Cleath used photos, PowerPoint, and posters to help the VBS children visualize the children of the community that they were helping.
- 3. Offer hands-on experiences.** Cleath set up a drilling rig and a hand pump in the church lobby which the kids could see and touch. Older kids were also encouraged to try to carry buckets of water as do the children of Sierra Leone.
- 4. Pray together and emphasize God's provision.** The VBS group prayed together for the children of Sierra Leone. Thom reminded the children that it is God who provides; in giving money for safe water, they were simply participating in God's work.

*** If your church would like to coordinate a Lifewater missions project geared to children,** please contact Lifewater. We would be happy to help you get in touch with a staff member or Volunteer Trainer in your area, obtain visual aids, and develop hands-on experiences for your young group.



Left: Some of the children that were impacted by the new source of safe water in Sierra Leone.

Safe Water Changes a Young Girl's Life in Kenya

By Norma Adhiambo, leader of Groups of Women in Agriculture (GWAKO), Kenya

There was a child by the name of Millicent Adhiambo. She was 12 years old. She attended Hongo Ongoza primary school in Kano. Millicent was a first-born and the only girl in a family of five children.

In Luo society, girls do specific duties like collecting water and fetching firewood. Being the first girl, the water responsibility was left to her.

Millicent fetched water two kilometers (1.24 miles) away from home. Millicent could only manage to bring home two buckets of water in a day. Her mother did not assist her because she had other responsibilities.

Millicent was always unhappy because getting two buckets a day was stressful. She did not have time to play with her friends, to attend school, or to clean herself. She hated teachers because they punished her when she reported late to school. This also made her hate school.

One day Millicent went to school and when she came back, there was no water in the house. It was late in the evening, and she feared being scolded by her parents because there was no water. So Millicent went to the river as it was getting dark.

When Millicent was on her way back from the river, two young men appeared from the bush. They grabbed her. She suspected that they wanted to rape her because she was alone and they were not familiar people. She managed to hit one of them with her bucket and through God's love was rescued by an old man who was taking care of his cattle.

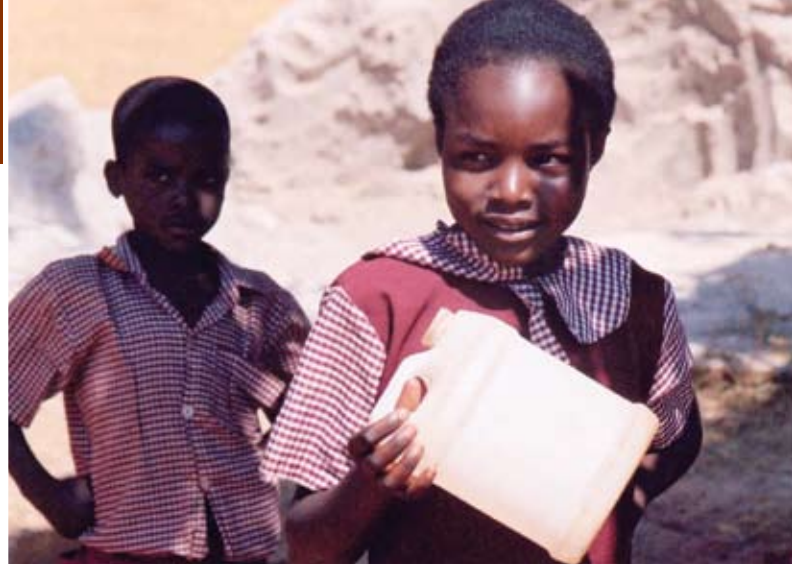
Traumatized, Millicent went home and told her parents. They were so sorry.

Fortunately, it was not long after that when GWAKO ministries drilled a well at Nyamkebe primary school, just 100 meters from Millicent's home.

Free from her duty of fetching water from far away, Millicent became happy because she had time to associate with her age mates. She also escaped dangers of being raped while going to fetch water. And now she is able to maintain personal hygiene because there is enough clean water for bathing and washing clothes.

Millicent is no longer at risk of using contaminated water. The water from the new well was tested at a government laboratory and was found to be fit for consumption.

Millicent went back to school. There was no punishment because she was ever punctual. She performed well in class because she had enough time to do her homework. Millicent is always one of the top ten in her class.



Seeds of Hope International Partnerships: Zambia's Children

By Kirk Schauer, Executive Director for Seeds of Hope International Partnerships (SHIP), Zambia; with Leslie Hawthorne Klingler

In Africa there's an attack against the family. An entire generation of parents in their 20s though 40s is being wiped out by AIDS, waterborne diseases, and conflict. In a population of 11 million there are over 600,000 AIDS orphans. Children are becoming the country's workers and parents. (It's not uncommon for a 13 year old to have a child.) Children are Zambia's present and future.

In Zambia, school children suffer for lack of safe water. Several of the schools where we work had to be closed because the well had broken and the children had to walk long distances to get water. At another school, dozens of children were infected with schistosomiasis after fetching water from a contaminated pond.

In partnership with Lifewater and UNICEF, Seeds of Hope is working in Kasempa and Ndola to provide 38 schools and their surrounding communities with safe water, sanitation, and hygiene training. The average school size is well over 500, so our work is helping vast numbers of children.

Zambian schools are an ideal place to work to bring hope and change to a community. When young children learn to use sanitary latrines and good hygiene, this raises the standard of what they expect at home. In addition, education is so valued in Zambia that parents are open to being taught new health practices by their educated kids.

Lifewater is an ideal partner for SHIP in our work with children. Lifewater's participatory training method is critical. The method helps people to see that both the country's problems and their resolutions belong to them. And the method works, because intertwined in Lifewater's teachings are God's principals. People's lifestyles change and the changes influence others. I have seen many mothers going out and sharing health and hygiene skills with their neighbors and friends.

I am committed to this work because I truly believe there is an open door of opportunity. Christians inspired by God's compassion need to hear the cries of the children and reach out in every way God directs us. Others can help the poor—it's inherently a good thing to do—but it's an uphill battle unless you combine it with the Gospel of Hope. Those who love and follow the Lord bring his hope with them. Take a little hope and plant it like a seed, and amazing things will happen.





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“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” Luke 2:10



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Leaving in December

Sierra Leone. Lead Trainer and Board Member Tim Cleath, along with Volunteer Trainers Rod Thompson and Leslie Halls, will be working with our partner Childhelp. They will be facilitating a training of national volunteers in Lifewater’s Community Health through Hygiene Program and conducting a BioSand Filter training.

Leaving in January

Togo. Team Leader Garon Harris, joined by Volunteer Trainers Susan Harris, Dean Cavanaugh, Brenda Gleason, and Randy Cram, will train our partners with the Assemblies of God Church. They will be training in Hand Pump Repair and Community Health through Hygiene.

Kenya. This trip was scheduled for November but had to be postponed until January due to security concerns during the November elections. The team will consist of Volunteer Trainers Dick Morris, Nancy Baker, Janet Proby, and Sally Scholl. They will be training our long-time partner, GWAKO, in Lifewater’s new Sanitation Programs.

Leaving in February

Indonesia. Dan Holmgren will be leading a team consisting of Robin Rader and others to train Lifewater partners with International Friends of Compassion in the Community Health through Hygiene and the Davnor Water Filter program.

Leaving in March

Zambia. Lifewater will host its second Regional Partners’ Conference in Lusaka, Zambia. Over 20 African partners will gather for one week to attend workshops on topics including community development, sanitation, accounting, and managing a Community Based Organization (CBO).

Please pray
for Volunteer
Trainers in
the field...