

ENHANCING ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER IN WESTERN PROVINCE – KENYA

ACTIVITY REPORT FOR OCTOBER, 2010

Introduction:

In the month of October, 2010, Concerns for the Girl Child Society continued with activities as planned. More concentration was on committee planning meetings and community sensitization in Western Kenya. Below is a detailed report on activities carried out during the said month.

Planned Activities for Samia:

- Identification of water points within the school compounds/surrounding.
- Community sensitization on use of clean water in collaboration with the public health officers and school health education teachers.
- Costing for the selected water types in consultation with water technicians.
- Development of water project committee's by-laws in the two schools and drawing plans of action.

Identification of water points:

It was realised that identification of water points can only be done by geologists /water technicians. However, in Nabuganda they could recall some water points identified earlier by some technicians. It was agreed that the water drilling team in Kakamega and any other companies be contacted for quotations. The survey is usually done at a fee. Elizabeth will follow up with the Kakamega office on the issue.

Community sensitization meetings on use of clean water:

The four communities in Samia and Sirisia (Malanga, Nabuganda, Sirisia mal and Namwesi ACK) were sensitized on importance of clean drinking water in collaboration with the public health officers. There were 35, 39, 45 and 55 participants respectively. Some of the key issues that were discussed include the following:

- The challenges children have faced due to use of dirty water was clear and both the parents/community members and teachers agreed that they have suffered due to use of unclean water. It was noted that there was a week when all teachers were ill. It is not easy to avoid the dirty water because clean water comes from as far as 5 to 10 kms away.
- There has been a broken relationship between parents and teachers because of water.
- Children are forced by parents to fetch water when they leave school in the evening at 6.30 p.m. This interferes with their education because they do not have time to do homework or study at home. It was noted that the schools have not been performing well. Children carrying heavy loads a long distance interferes with their physical health. Furthermore, they are exposed to sexual exploitation by boys/men as they walk long distances in the night.
- The water which the community drinks or uses for washing utensils is contaminated. This is usually water that collects after rain and has all the dirt in it including human faeces. It was pointed out that most community members do not have toilets therefore they use their Shambas (gardens) as toilets.

- The community has continuously suffered from water borne diseases such as bilhazia, cholera, typhoid among others. The public health officer stresses that the diseases cannot go unless they change their lifestyle and thus constructing toilets and using clean water for cooking, drinking and washing utensils.
- *Parents were concerned that girls do not go to school during their menses because of lack of water and wash rooms in the schools. They also lack sanitary towels. If they could have bathrooms when water is available it would really benefit them.*
- *Teachers teach about hygiene – wash hands when from the toilets but there is no water.*

Participants were then sensitized on the benefits of using clean, pure and safe water as follows; -

- Two thirds of the earth's surface covered by water. The human body consisting of 75 percent of it, it is evidently clear that water is one of the prime elements responsible for life on earth.
- Water circulates through the land just as it does through the human body, transporting, dissolving, and replenishing nutrients and organic matter, while carrying away waste material. Further in the body, it regulates the activities of fluids, tissues, cells, lymph, blood and glandular secretions.
- An average adult body contains 42 litres of water and with just a small loss of 2.7 litres he or she can suffer from dehydration, displaying symptoms of irritability, fatigue, nervousness, dizziness, weakness, headaches and consequently reach a state of pathology.
- Water has been used since antiquity as a symbol by which to express devotion and purity. Some cultures, like the ancient Greeks, went as far as to worship gods who were thought to live in and command the waters. Whole cities have been built by considering the location and availability of pure drinking water.
- Contrary to the past, our recent developed technological society has become indifferent to this miracle of life. Our natural heritage (rivers, seas and oceans) has been exploited, mistreated and contaminated.
- Our drinking water today, far from being pure, contains some two hundred deadly commercial chemicals. Add to that bacteria, viruses, inorganic minerals (making the water hard) and you have a chemical cocktail that is unsuitable (if not deadly) for human consumption. John Archer in his book *'THE WATER YOU DRINK, HOW SAFE IS IT?'* from contaminated drinking water. These infested waters are today in most major cities which is a direct result of the unsuccessful treatment of recycled sewage effluent.
- These parasites initially venture their way into the sewage effluent, from Hospitals, abattoir and farms waste, which contain blood, intestines and faeces. While immunocompetent (the ability to develop an immune response) people may remain asymptomatic (presenting no symptoms) by ingestion of this parasites, immunocompromised (i.e. malnutrition Cancer and Aids) patients are at risk.
- Spring water contains those unwanted inorganic minerals and their purity is debatable if you consider the pollution of the soil. So use it sparingly or when nothing else is available.
- Another important factor is the amount of water necessary for our body to function at its peak performance. Bearing in mind again that your body is about 75 percent water it is easy to understand that water must be your body's most essential daily ingredient.

- Your body loses each day about 2-3 liters of water through elimination, urination, perspiration and respiration. However, this may increase during illness, high performance, exercise, pregnancy and nursing.
- In normal conditions your body needs to replace the fluids it has lost throughout the day. Most of fluids should be replaced by drinking pure water. The rest you should get from fruit, vegetables and their juices. Attention must be given that the elderly and children are meeting their daily requirements.
- Dry mouth is not the only indication of dehydration, in fact it is the last sign. You need to acquire the habit to drink water even when you think you don't need it and eventually your true thirst mechanisms will be reawakened. Signs to look for that identify with dehydration are constipation, headaches, indigestion, weight gain, fluid retention, dark and pungent urine, and their associated pathologies colitis, kidney stones, bladder and urinary tract infections
- Water serves as a lubricant
- Water forms the base for saliva
- Water forms the fluids that surround the joints.
- Water regulates the body temperature, as the cooling and heating is distributed through perspiration.
- Water helps to alleviate constipation by moving food through the intestinal tract and thereby eliminating waste- the best detox agent.

- **SUMMARY**

- Water is involved in all bodily functions: digestion, assimilation, elimination, respiration, maintaining temperature (homeostasis) integrity and the strength of all bodily structures.
- Today, the water is polluted with hundreds of toxins and impurities. Authorities only test for a small number of them. Your body, being primarily water, requires sufficient daily water replacement in order to function efficiently.
 - Clean water is safe from diseases.
 - Contributes to good health as our bodies require water.
 - Water is important to the mechanics of the human body. The body cannot work without it, just as a car cannot run without gas and oil. In fact, all the cell and organ functions made up in our entire anatomy and physiology depend on water for their functioning.
 - In addition to the daily maintenance of our bodies, water also plays a key role in the prevention of disease. Drinking eight glasses of water daily can decrease the risk of colon cancer by 45%, bladder cancer by 50% and it can potentially even reduce the risk of breast cancer. And those are just a few examples! As you follow other links on our website, you can read more in depth about how water can aid in the prevention and cure of many types of diseases, ailments and disorders that affect the many systems of our bodies.
 - Since water is such an important component to our physiology, it would make sense that the quality of the water should be just as important as the quantity. Drinking water should always be clean and free of contaminants to ensure proper health and wellness.
 - Communities should ensure they also use toilets so that running water is not contaminated as it is used for different purposes including animals for drinking.

- A healthy community is one that uses clean pure drinking water. *The diseases and challenges facing the girl child and even teachers will be solved once there is availability of clean water and community members adhere to it.*
- Participants were happy and promised to support the project.

Committee planning meetings:

Committees met for planning in various project sites. Some of the achievements during such planning meetings include;

- Development of action plans.
- Development of committee by laws.
- Planning for community participation in the project i.e. their roles and how etc.

Costing for water project types

All the sites selected boreholes. The water technicians who drill boreholes and geologists are only found in Kakamega. It was agreed that Elizabeth consults and makes a follow up with them. The committees will get a feed back in their next meetings scheduled for November, 2010.

Note: The offices in Kakamega were visited but the key officers were out for a workshop. One issue that is clear is about the survey to be done in the schools at a cost before they can quote for drilling because it all depends on the water bed in each area.

Given the new developments about other costs that might be incurred, we decided to stick to the four schools first until we get a quotation for drilling in Western Kenya.