

Clean Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Water is life. For the Global Classroom's World Citizen Essay, I chose Global Goal #6, to improve Clean Water and Sanitation. Having access to clean water should be considered a basic human right for all people, regardless of race, economic status, or geopolitical location. But in reality, 2.4 billion people on earth do not have access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (*Blaney*). This is an unacceptable social injustice! I will devote funds towards technological and scientific research to find a safe, cost-effective and eco-friendly method of installing innovative filtration systems for purifying water. While this research is underway, I would reach out to the organization Just One Africa, and support their current efforts to supply families with gravity fed filters. In areas where water is scarce and people travel far distances to carry water back to their homes, I would fund the digging of sustainable wells and install well pumps. I would also focus on setting up a model of education to teach the importance of the correct use and care of these tools that are allowing these communities to finally have access to greater health through clean water, sanitation and hygiene awareness.

Though availability of clean water and sanitation is a worldwide issue, the region of the world that I would focus my efforts to improve the water crisis would be in the 48 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. "This area accounts for more than 40% of the global population without access to improved drinking water" (*Just One Africa*). In this area, the statistics indicate that four out of ten people, or 750 million people, don't have access to clean water, or adequate sanitation and hygiene (*Blaney*). While researching this topic, I learned that, in Sub-Saharan Africa, women and children spend more time walking to bring water to their homes, than any other activity during the day. This is time that could be spent going to school, or learning a trade to

help increase the family's income. I was surprised to learn that Africa alone could save forty billion hours a year if this task of walking for water was eliminated ("Access to Clean Water and Sanitation: A Guide To Global Issues")! But, 48 countries is still a huge area. I would start with one country at a time. Providing gravity fed filters to the countries with easy access to water, and then begin digging wells in the areas where people are walking hours to find water.

The solutions for increasing access to clean water will look different depending on the source of the water. For example, Ethiopia has plenty of water underground, but needs the resources to bring this clean water to the surface with a drill (Solving the Water Crisis). Digging wells and installing pumps is costly, and requires maintenance. A creative, fun, eco-friendly sustainable solution could be to follow the model of the Colombian ecovillage, Gaviotas, and set up children's seesaws to power water pumps to bring groundwater to the surface (*FOA*). I would educate and employ interested people who live in the area to maintain these water systems, and inspire the children to help by playing on the equipment that pumps the water.

On the other hand, other areas in Africa, like Kenya, have surface water, but these water sources are contaminated with raw sewage, industrial waste, parasites, and bacteria, which can cause water-borne illness in the 18 million Kenyan people that do not have access to clean, safe water(*JOA*). These communities need access to filtration systems that quickly purify water, making it safe for human consumption. I would begin by funding the distribution and education towards the use of gravity fed filters in the homes and schools of these African communities. Presently, the Just One Africa organization has begun the distribution of a gravity fed filter that can filter up to a million gallons of water, and does not require any replacement parts. The filters have a fast flow rate, which eliminates the need to store water, thus reducing the possibility of

water being contaminated from storage containers. The filter's hollow membrane technology is able to remove 99.9% of harmful bacteria and protozoa that have been responsible for the unnecessary deaths of thousands of people (*World Health Organization*). Decreasing the risk of illness from drinking water will save lives, ensuring money saved on medicine and an overall healthier standard of living for all families.

Providing water filters is a first step towards helping people access clean, healthy drinking water. But, access to clean sanitation areas is another key factor to help improve the water and sanitation crisis. In Ethiopia alone, 38 million people do not have access to a clean, private bathroom (*World Health Organization*). I would employ a devoted staff to educate and hire local workers to install safe sanitation stations with private composting toilets and handwashing stations, one village at a time. I would also create an education system to help teach these rural communities about the importance of sanitation (hand washing, bathing, etc.), in addition to helping them understand that accessing and consuming clean water will help maintain healthy lives.

This discussion has increased my personal awareness of the global need for access to clean water, safe sanitation and education towards good hygiene for basic health and wellbeing. This crisis affects a huge number of the global population, and can feel overwhelming as to where one would begin to help. But, my research on this subject has inspired me to reach out to the organization Just One Africa, and become an active global citizen by donating money towards the purchase of a gravity fed filter for a family in Kenya. Change is possible when we focus together to combine science, resources and humanity.

Work Cited

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