

A Pencil and a Clean Cup of Water

Amondi stops. “Mama how much longer?” she asks. The sun burns the back of Amondi’s neck. “I don’t know.” Amondi’s mother replies. Amondi falls to her knees on the burning sand. She notices something in the sand. It is a pencil. Amondi has seen one only once before. “Mama look, it’s a *penseli!*” she says in Swahili. Her mother looks away. Amondi’s mother says “You don’t need a *penseli*. You can’t go to school. You need to fetch water.” Amondi turns the pencil over then slips the pencil in her pocket saving it for later. Returning to their journey to find one cup of water, Amondi can’t stop thinking about the pencil. She shakes the thought free and returns to carrying an empty bucket on top of her head.

Amondi is like many other girls in Kenya, wanting to go to school but can’t because they need to fetch water. Access to water is a big problem in Kenya which is affecting children’s health and education. I would like to change that.

The world is getting warmer at a steady rate. According to the Climate Reality Project, “15 of the 16 hottest years on record have come this century.” As the globe warms, climate change creeps up on us causing extreme droughts and heavy rain falls. It also melts glaciers and ice caps causing even more floods and destruction. Most of climate change is caused by us as we are burning fossil fuels on an everyday basis. This causes the Greenhouse Effect. In Kenya access to water is a huge problem. Women and children have to walk several hours to reach clean water. They then have to make the return trip with the extra weight of the water. More than one trip like this takes up 6 or more hours of their day.

As the globe warms, droughts become more common. In places that have had droughts water is scarce, and access to water is hard to find. Women and children walk miles each day

looking for clean water. When they do finally come across a water source it is not always clean enough to drink. Their only choice is to take the water home, but they cannot carry enough in one trip to satisfy their family's needs. So right after they get home, they have to return to the water source. According to Ride for a Drop, "200 million hours are consumed in just one day by women collecting water."

In Kenya the Savannah stretches out for miles. Most people come to see the Savannah and its lions, giraffes, zebras, hippos, rhinos and more. But Kenya holds more than that. Kenya has mountains, deserts, forests, and swamps. Kenya has animals that are no where else in the world. In Kenya school is free for children, but many don't go because they have to help their family by working in the fields, taking care of cattle, cooking and fetching water. More children should be able to go to school, so we need to find a way to help families have access to water. Then children can get a good education and be able to have enough water to last them each day without spending hours searching for water. We have some choices to solve that problem. We could dig wells that would hold enough water for a town. We could help build a rain catchment for individuals or for an entire town. We could build a pipeline or redirect a river to flow into various towns. However, to do all of these would be expensive so we must choose one.

My issue is water access in Kenya. Woman and children have to walk hours and miles each day looking for water that is safe to drink. Because of that children miss out on school. My solution is that we should build a well. But you have to choose between a shallow clean water well that costs about \$30,000 for the drilling equipment. To build the well if you already have the equipment it costs from \$1,000 to \$1,500. If you don't it costs from \$31,000 to \$31,500 and will satisfy a small village. You could also build a deep well with lots of clean water that costs about \$150,000 for the equipment, and to build the well if you already have the equipment it

costs about \$8,000 that will serve 3,000 or more people. The shallow well is dug with small rigs. They dig from 150-200 feet through rock and soil. A hand pump is at the top of the well and allows the water to run out when pumped. The deep well can be up to 900 feet. It can take many days to drill. Because the water is too much weight for a hand pump to lift, you have to install an electric pump, which is very expensive. Now you know about deep wells and shallow wells. I would probably choose a shallow well. It is cheaper, and it would satisfy a small village by giving the people in the village just enough water to support their family each day.

Amondi watches men use a rig to drill a hole in the center of town. She holds her mother's hand in one hand and a pencil in the other. "Mama?" Amondi asks. "Can I go to school?" Amondi's mother is quiet. Then she says "*Ndiyo*. Yes, you may go to school." Amondi embraces her mother "*Nashiriki, Nashiriki*, thank you!" Amondi smiles down at the pencil. "I can't wait to use you *penseli*." she says. Amondi hugs the pencil against her chest imagining the friends she will make and the things she will learn and the clean water she will drink.

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