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Charity: Water Brings Clean Water to Developing Countries

Imagine Having Water You Can't Bathe or Drink With?

By Shamontiel

Imagine turning on your sink and not being able to wash your hands with the water that comes out of the faucet. Now you turn on your shower, but the water is so dirty, you're hesitant to bathe in it. You go to the kitchen, but you can't even drink that water or make anything that requires water without worrying about your health. Now multiply that by 1.1 billion people and understand why charity: water was born.

Nicky Yates, a Communications Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, and Executive Assistant to the founder of charity: water spoke with me about this 8-staff organization.

Takeaways

- charity: water has raised over \$7 million to help with the water supply.
- Someone dies every 15 seconds from water-related diseases.

Why do you think the United States should care about what's happening with the water in developing countries when we have so many issues right here in America (ex. recession)?

Right now, 1.1 billion people don't have access to clean, safe drinking water, and that means someone dies every 15 seconds from water-related diseases. We believe that if you're devoted to supporting domestic issues, continue supporting those. However, if you are interested in international issues, water is a crucial issue. It's the number one reason that girls drop out of school globally. It impacts health, education and poverty issues. It is a basic right, and we want to help ensure everyone has it. Water changes everything.

Your site asks for a \$20 donation to help the problem with clean water in developing countries. What does the \$20 cover?

100% of all public donations go directly toward project costs on the ground. The \$20 donation can provide one person clean, safe drinking water for 20 years. We use this figure based off an average well costing \$5,000 that can serve a community of 250 or more people.

Is there a permanent way to fix the water problem, or is charity: water committed to a temporary solution?

charity: water is committed to sustainable water solutions. We work with partners on the ground and the community. Our water projects can last 20 years. We build freshwater wells, spring protection systems, rainwater catchment systems and boreholes.

How did you become involved with charity: water?

I heard of Scott Harrison, our founder, when he returned from his humanitarian service on Mercy Ships. I volunteered with his exhibition, Mercy, to raise awareness for Mercy Ships. I then remained on his volunteer list and received updates when he started charity: water. I loved the mission and vision and volunteered sporadically. The more I volunteered, the more I loved it. I came on as a full-time volunteer in November of 2007, then as an intern later that month, then on as staff at the start of 2008.

Have you visited a developing country with unclear water? What was your first reaction?

I have visited developing countries. I traveled to rural Namibia right out of high school. It was a community development trip. We went there to help raise awareness about the AIDS situation, but we wanted to really get to know the culture and the community first. We spent a good chunk of our time helping with daily tasks. As a woman, I assisted the other women in the community with getting their daily water from the British Embassy about a mile away. We weren't allowed to shower but once a week and for five minutes due to the water situation. It blew my mind. I was used to 45 minute baths everyday, sometimes twice a day. I never thought about the fact that this could be something that someone didn't have.

The next summer, I went to Almaty, Kazakhstan, again for community development. The people were amazing. I stayed with a host family for about two months, helping teach English and develop a sports camp. This time I was staying in an urban area, but we still didn't have water to spare. We'd have to heat up a bucket of water for the entire household's showering needs. And we were permitted a kettle's worth of water a day for other hygiene and sanitation purposes.

I then visited Honduras this past July with charity: water to evaluate some of our projects in that area. And I am currently in Central African Republic evaluating projects with charity: water.

charity: water has raised over \$7 million to help with the water supply. How did they go about doing this? Was it

all everyday people's donations?

charity: water uses online donations, individual fundraisers, events and corporate partnerships, such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Theory, and Brighton Collectibles. These are the main avenues that we've been able to raise funds to support our water projects.

There are some celebrities involved with charity: water. Who are some of the more popular ones and how did they get involved?

Jennifer Connelly and Terry George have donated their time for our first PSA. Adrian Grenier and Jessica Stam have hosted our past three charity: water balls. And Jenna Elfman and Virginia Madsen have donated their birthdays for clean water in Ethiopia through our September campaign.

The Twestival event just ended. What is the next event (where, when, how long)?

Our next event will be our opening at the Chelsea Market on March 10th: <http://www.charity:water/chelseamarket/index.htm>. Our exhibition will be up at the venue for three months following the opening.

More resources

<http://www.charitywater.org/about/mission.htm>

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