

THIS IS EXCELLENT

July 2018



Excellent Development is a UK registered charity that supports some of the world's poorest people to transform their own lives.

We support communities in rural drylands to build sand dams, which provide safe water for life for just £13 per person.

Our goal is to enable 1 million sand dams by 2040, bringing clean water to 500 million people.

www.excellent.org.uk

WHAT'S INSIDE?

Four dryland communities supported by Excellent (and your donations) share their unique perspectives on how sand dams and clean water have transformed their lives.



Investing in our future

Since farmers Justus and Immaculate no longer have to walk 5km to fetch water, the impact has been amazing.



Rural role models

Meet two women who, despite years of challenges and setbacks, have paved the way for their community.



Fighting disease

Clean water changes everything. Hear from two farmers about what it did for them, and their children.



Charles' story

Farmer Charles is giving his children and community a chance for education and work with sand dams.

EXCELLENT NEWS

Investing in our future

Walking long distances to collect water has many consequences for communities. One of which is the lack of time it leaves for other tasks. We caught up with Justus Kalenge and Immaculate Kioko, Chair and Vice-Chair respectively of the Kithunthi self-help group, to discuss this issue.

Justus describes how before the construction of their sand dam, *“most hours of the day were drained in search of water”*. This was because their water source was over 5km away. The lack of time left Justus unable to cultivate his land to its full potential. This meant he didn't have enough food to feed his family, or income for his children's education. He describes the embarrassment he felt seeing his children dressed, ready to go to school, but not having enough money to give them to pay their fees.

The opportunity to increase incomes (by selling surplus produce) is one of the main benefits of sand dam projects. Justus tells us that he used to make around 5,000 Kenyan Shillings (KES) per season on his farm, but since the sand dam it is up to around 20,000 KES. This is an increase of over 100 GBP, quite a significant amount in the Kenyan context. For Immaculate, the increase is even greater; she now makes around 50,000 KES (370 GBP).

Immaculate and Justus have achieved this through their hard work in practicing the climate-smart agriculture techniques taught by our partners, Africa Sand Dam Foundation (ASDF). This includes planting drought-resistant crops, intercropping, and developing vegetable plots. Immaculate tells us this means that *“every group*

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You can work for more hours because you are not spending time finding water.

Immaculate Kioko,
Kithunthi self-help group,
Kenya

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member now has a small garden in their homestead for fresh vegetables for the family, and you can work for more hours because you are not spending time finding water.”

The increase in income does not take into account the savings that households are able to make by eating their own produce. As Justus says *“I am very proud of the sand dam because it helped me to have greens on my farm, near my home. I don't need to get money from my pocket to buy greens.”* This helps farmers gain a much stronger financial position, where money earned can be put towards school fees and reinvested into their farms.

Excellent and ASDF also try to promote a culture of shared learning within communities. Members of self-help groups are taken on learning exchanges to other groups to learn how they have approached certain challenges, exchange ideas and then take those ideas back to their own community. Justus describes how his group *“have exchanged tours so that our eyes can be opened in terms of wealth creation, in terms of how to use water to gain wealth.”*

This shared learning is another tool to help communities work their own way out of poverty, something that Justus and Immaculate are well on their way to doing.



Justus Kalenge and Immaculate Kioko collecting clean water close to their homes.

EMPOWERED TO TRANSFORM LIVES

Esther and Christine: rural role models

In rural Kenya, it is often seen as a woman's job to fetch water. Every day.

Their families rely on them to collect clean water, which will prevent life threatening diseases and malnutrition; as without water, they would struggle to eat, drink and stay clean.

However, according to the World Health Organisation, over 800 million people lack basic access to clean water.

These are people like Esther Sungo and Christine Mutisya, who, before the construction of a sand dam, used to walk a gruelling two hours, each way, to reach their nearest river and well. Four hours were stolen from their day, plus the time spent waiting in long queues for water from the river; a source which was contaminated (Christine herself once contracted bilharzia from the water there) and relied upon by many other communities in the surrounding areas.

With 14 children between them, there seemed no escape from the arduous duty they carried out to keep themselves and their loved ones healthy, and alive. They remember leaving their homes, alone, as early as 3am, feeling “vulnerable” in isolating darkness, just to ensure they collected enough water.

But things are different now.

In 2006 they joined Malaika self-help group, and 12 years on, they tell a happier story with beaming faces. Christine explains how “*having water near our homes killed 20 birds with one stone.*”

The journey to collect water has been reduced to half an hour each way. Gone is their anxiety over having to fetch water overnight. Precious time saved from the journey is now invested in agricultural training, farming and creating beautiful homes they can be proud of. Plants and trees now flourish in the area, providing a variety of different fruits and vegetables like sweet potatoes, oranges, papaya and mangos. In turn, their community also have improved nutrition, with a “significant drop” in the cases of waterborne illnesses, Esther says.

All of this has also led to significant financial gain. Higher quality livestock from improved farming now generates a greater return at the local market that averages at around 8,000 KES a month. On top of that, they created a group bank account they can access to pay school fees for children.

Esther and Christine are reaping the benefits of sticking with the sand dam project, despite facing challenges along the way. Over 350 members started in their group, only 26 remain (including Esther and Christine), but they have brought new life and a wealth of opportunity to their community. As women trying to eke out a living in rural drylands, they have gone from feeling ‘vulnerable’, to being empowered and respected role models, with Esther concluding, “*I feel that my thinking has broadened since we started working together. I am now more developed than I was before and all this makes me happy.*”



**Christine Mutisya (above) and
Esther Sungo (below) on their
farms which have flourished
since building their sand dams.**





Christina Ngete and Meshack Munyao on their orange farm.

FIGHTING DISEASE WITH SAND DAMS

Life-saving water

When the members of Ngao ya Kiome self-help group approached Excellent's partners to request guidance in building a sand dam, diseases and ill-health were common in the community. Group Chair, Meshack Munyao, tells us of the cases of typhoid within his family and that he himself suffered from amoebiasis, requiring treatment at a nearby hospital.

Commonly contracted through drinking contaminated water, amoebiasis is a potentially fatal infection that can cause severe diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Meshack tells us that he had *"severe stomach pains, headaches... if you pressed my stomach it would be very painful."*

It was also very frequent for children to fall ill, and to miss school as a result. Meshack recalls his own childhood. *"As a kid, my life was challenging due to frequent illnesses brought about by contaminated water."* He tells us that his environment *"had an effect on the rate of growth for most children at that time... they would not grow as fast as they should because of a lack of variety in terms of the foods that were available."*



Now when I look at my children, they are growing very fast, they are healthy and they are falling ill less often.

Meshack Munyao,
Ngao ya Kiome self-help group,
Kenya



The issue of stunted growth is still relevant across developing countries to this day. According to The World Bank, while rates of stunting have fallen drastically over recent decades, latest figures show that in Kenya, one in four children under five years old will still suffer from stunted growth due to poor nutrition.

Sand dams can help with this.

By enabling farmers to grow more varied crops, and in greater quantities, they are able to provide nutritious diets for their children.

"Now when I look at my children, they are growing very fast, they are healthy and they are falling ill less often. Their brain development is also different from ours. They are able to grasp concepts quickly and faster because they lack nothing and they have a variety of foods where they can get different vitamins from different vegetables and fruits. Their growth is not affected; we do not have cases of stunted growth in children right now," says Meshack.

Christina Ngete, Treasurer of the self-help group, also praises the difference a school water tank can provide. She describes how having a water tank at their school *"removes the burden of collecting water from these kids."* According to Christina, this is a great relief, as many of the older generations, who did not have water tanks while they were at school, still suffer from back aches and other ailments from carrying water long distances.

This is one of the many reasons that Christina says she is *"very proud of the achievements we have realised in conjunction with Excellent Development."*

GIVING THE OPPORTUNITY FOR EDUCATION

Charles' story

In the remote Kikumbulyu area of southeast Kenya, children's lives were once deeply affected by a lack of immediate access to clean water. Sickness and malnutrition was detrimental to their education. Their futures were sacrificed as a result of insufficient crops, waterborne disease, as well as so much time spent on journeys to seek treatment.

They depended on adults who suffered the same circumstances. Together they would persevere, though stuck in a cycle of poverty; juggling their aspirations to gain an education and to work, whilst trying to mediate harsh conditions.

Charles Mutua Syeviti is the father of eight children. He has experienced the turmoil of trying to provide the best possible education for a large family in an otherwise challenging environment.

He talks us through what would happen when someone fell ill (most often as a result of bad hygiene and a lack of variety of nutritious foods), before he joined Ithime self-help group in 2010.

"There was only one hospital in Makindu which was more than 20km from here. And because there was not enough income, there were no motorbikes then, so people would often walk 20km with their sickness. So, imagine walking 20km with diseases like diarrhoea all the way to the hospital." On top of that, Charles stated that hospitals back then were severely understaffed, meaning patients would lose hours, sometimes days, trying to get treatment.

And with people forced to travel so far, so often, it was impossible to invest time in meeting the educational needs of children. He explains *"our children obviously missed school, and it is their parents who would have to walk, carrying their sick children on their backs, 20km away to the same hospital."*

Charles also relays the struggle of paying school fees. The lack of access to water had damaging effects on crops and livestock which crippled the community.

Now however, since the construction of eight sand dams in three villages, and two water tanks, crops are flourishing in water rich fields.

Charles (now Chair of the group) explains *"Pigeon peas, green grams and cowpeas are all doing extremely well. We can also grow mango and papaya trees, which we couldn't grow before."*

He shares his feelings of *"contentedness"* with the opportunities now available to him and his family, opportunities he can *"only afford because of the income made from selling our crops,"* adding he *"can see a direct impact on the lives in my community and livestock, which makes me very proud."*

With this weight off the minds of parents like Charles, more focus can be put on making sure children receive adequate education, freeing the next generation from the indignity of not having sufficient water to wash their uniforms, or themselves. And in response to all the supporters, and to the work of ASDF and Excellent, he emphasises, *"We cannot say thank you enough."*

Charles Mutua Syeviti has seen so much change for his family and himself since his community started building sand dams in 2010.



Leave a lasting legacy of freedom, health and opportunity

We know that your first priority when making a Will is to provide for those closest to you. As well as remembering family and friends, some people also decide to leave a gift to a special cause, to make a lasting difference to something they really care about.

Sand dams provide a lifelong supply of water for people living in drylands.

Water changes everything. It brings health, freedom and opportunity.

Having a water source nearby means that people, especially women and children, can save up to 11½ hours a day. Their lives are completely transformed, for generations to come.

It takes many small components to build a sand dam. Whatever you can afford, we will turn it into something important and tangible, opening up a world of opportunities for some of the world's poorest people.



Jane Wayaua Muasembi invested time in building a sand dam alongside Ithime self-help group (Kenya) to ensure her 8 year old son, Musila, doesn't have to walk long distances for water like she had to do when she was a young girl.

If you would like to find out more about leaving a gift to Excellent in your Will, please contact Judith Eaton on 020 3752 5780 or email supportercare@excellent.org.uk. Alternatively, tick the relevant box on the form overleaf, and return to us in the Freepost envelope provided.

PLEASE DONATE

Here are some ways in which your donations could help people living in drylands to build sand dams, and make a living from farming:

- £15 could provide a dryland farmer with drought-tolerant seeds, to grow a reliable source of fresh food for their children
- £30 could supply a community with a rake, gardening fork, shovel and watering cans, to plant trees for fruit, fuel and fodder
- £60 could provide a community with a roll of barbed wire, to reinforce their sand dam and keep it anchored to the bedrock
- £80 could provide 500 seedlings and a spray pump, to protect the tree nursery from decimation by insects
- £120 could provide a community with a wheelbarrow and 10 bags of cement, to help them construct their sand dam
- £160 could provide a full set of 25 metal shovels
- £370 could provide a community with manure, organic pesticides and seeds to plant a shared growing plot
- £420 could provide all of the tools needed to build a sand dam
- £580 could provide all of the barbed wire and steel bars needed to reinforce a sand dam
- £950 could provide a furrow irrigation system, to supply water to a community dam
- £1300 could provide a community with a water pump and shallow well, to safely extract drinking water from the sand dam

My choice is: _____

Our reference: 381

LEGACY GIVING

☐ I would like to find out more about leaving a gift to Excellent in my Will.

GIFT AID ADDS 25%!

**Gift Aid makes every £1 worth £1.25 at no extra cost to you.
Tick 'yes' to make your donation worth 25% more.**

giftaid it

Yes ☐

No ☐

I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. If it is less, I understand that I will be responsible for refunding the difference. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give in the future or for the past 4 years until further notice.

Signed:

Date:

In order for us to reclaim tax on your donation, please provide your name and postal address below:

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| Title: | First name: |
| Last name(s): | |
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Your support is vital to people living in drylands, so they can provide their families with clean water for life. We would love to send you information by telephone, text message and email on our fundraising appeals, events, expeditions and volunteering opportunities, so you can continue to support some of the world's poorest people to transform their lives. If you are happy with this, please write your email address and/or phone number above. We promise never to sell or swap your details and you can change your preferences at any time by calling 020 3752 5780 or email supportercare@excellent.org.uk. To read our full Privacy Statement, please visit www.excellentdevelopment.com/about-us/legals/privacy-policy or you can request a copy by post. If you would prefer to stop receiving mailings from us, or would like to reduce the number of communications you receive, please let us know, either by return post, email or telephone, and we will act on your request immediately.

Our reference: 381

Your generous donations are transforming lives.

To see the impacts of your support and follow our latest work, why not join us on social media?

You can find us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube:

facebook.com/excellentdevelopment

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We'd love to hear from you!

excellent.org/keepintouch

A man with a warm smile is holding a small tree sapling in a black plastic bag. He is wearing a light-colored jacket over a pink shirt. The background is a lush green forest. The text is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

Since 2002, Excellent Development has supported 947,000 people in dryland communities to build over 1,000 sand dams, and to plant over 1.1 million trees. Stay in touch and up to date at: www.excellent.org.uk