

IN THE MUD

Theme: water and sanitation, Christian Aid Week

Country focus: Kenya

Aim: to explore water and sanitation issues; to understand the challenges faced by young people denied access to clean water; to raise awareness during Christian Aid Week (9-15 May 2010) of Christian Aid's vision and work to eradicate poverty.

Materials/preparation:

- a plastic bag (tied and filled with a wet flannel/loo paper)
- a bottle of dirty water (you could just add some mud)
- the *In the Mud* PowerPoint presentation, available from www.christianaid.org.uk/learn

Assembly presentation

1 Show slide 1. Greet the group and ask everyone to stand up. Explain that you are going to read out a list of morning tasks and that you want them to sit down when they hear something that they did before they left home for school this morning:

- had a shower
- brushed their teeth
- used the loo
- had a drink
- washed their hands.

By now everyone should be sitting down. Ask if they notice one common element that people need to complete all those tasks (the answer is water).

Explain (with a straight face) that it is lucky that they used their water at home because unfortunately there is a problem with the water supply at school today. It will shortly be shut off and the local authority was thinking about shutting school for the day. There may be some excitement/uproar at this point, so take a moment to quieten everyone down

before telling them that fortunately the council has managed to make alternative arrangements and will be providing lovely clean drinking water (hold up the bottle of dirty water) and some plastic bags that everyone can use to go to the loo in (hold up a plastic bag). Unfortunately, no one will be able to wash their hands, but that shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Ask if everyone is happy with this plan, and if anyone has any questions. Students will probably be incredulous about the arrangements, so you can draw it out for a moment before revealing that, of course, this is not really the case and the water supply is fine. But although you were joking, it would in actual fact have been no joke if the water supply was really cut off. Point out to students how difficult it would be to go without running water at home or at school, even for one day. It would have made conditions smelly and potentially dangerous.

Ask if students know what would have been dangerous about the lack of water (answers include dehydration and the spread of disease through not washing hands). Things would have got much worse if water was cut off longer; can they imagine what the school would be like after a week, a month, a year? Explain:

*There would be nowhere to wash your hands and the loos would start to overflow so germs would spread and you might even have to resort to drinking dirty water, which could make you ill. Around 5,000 children around the world die every day from drinking unsafe water and not having proper sanitation, such as toilets and washing facilities.**

- 2 Show slide 2.** *In the slums around Kenya's capital city, Nairobi, the conditions that we imagined earlier are a daily reality. Without access to clean water for washing, drinking and cleaning, young people and their parents face a deadly cycle of disease.*
- 3 Show slide 3.** *This is Matopeni [pronounced 'mat-oh-penny']. People who live in Matopeni have no access to toilets or showers; the name 'Matopeni' actually means 'in the mud'.*
- 4 Show slide 4.** *These children are on their way to collect water in Matopeni. But they may well find that the tap is not working when they arrive. Any water they can collect must be treated with chemicals to make it safe to drink, but this is an expense that most families in Matopeni cannot afford, which puts them at risk of serious diseases, such as typhoid. Imagine how you might feel living in such conditions without any chance of moving away. It might make you feel desperate, angry or hopeless.*
- 5 Show slide 5.** *But these three young residents of Matopeni have not succumbed to feelings of hopelessness. Jeremiah (pictured right), 12, Anastacia (in green, left), 13, and Winifred (in orange, centre), 10, want to do something positive about their situation. They fully understand the problems in their community, and have some good ideas for making improvements. 'The worst thing is when the toilet is full because it flows out to the tap and then into*

the drainage and when it rains it comes into the house and you might even get cholera [a dangerous illness],' explains Anastacia. 'I would like the toilets repaired, and to build taps and more loos, and also to repair the drainage.'

- 6 Show slide 6.** *This is Jeremiah's drawing of Matopeni in which he shows the many challenges the community faces. Note the dirty water, rubbish and faeces (which means poo) on the roofs.*
- 7 Show slide 7.** *This drawing shows the changes Jeremiah would like to make. Note the clean river, 'good water' pump, lightbulbs, clean roofs, bathroom, toilets and mango trees. What a wonderful vision Jeremiah has of improving his community! He has a great source of inspiration for this: his aunt Veronica.*
- 8 Show slide 8.** *Veronica and her friend decided that they needed to take action themselves to make things better and so they set up a community group called Arise and Shine. The group has organised rubbish collections and campaigns for better water and sanitation in Matopeni.*

Jeremiah also wants to make his vision of a changed community a reality. 'I want to earn a living in the future and to have a family and be able to support them,' he says. 'In school my teacher told me to draw some pictures for the wall. She gave me morale, and that's why I like drawing and want to be an architect. If I'm an architect, I can help improve Matopeni.'

What could we do to draw inspiration from people such as Veronica and Jeremiah, and how could we help to improve life in our communities and around the world?

- 9 Show final slide.** *This week is Christian Aid Week, when all around the UK and Ireland, people are doing their bit to help eradicate poverty by collecting money to support Christian Aid and the amazing people and partner organisations with whom it works.*

Christian Aid supports people such as Veronica and Jeremiah who have great ideas and work hard to make life better in difficult situations around the world.

Reflection

Today we have imagined what it might be like if our school was without clean water and toilets. Let's make sure that we appreciate how lucky we are to have clean water in our taps and flushing toilets in our buildings. Let's resolve to do what we can to keep our school and local community clean and healthy as we keep in mind the inspiring people who are taking action to improve their communities in much more difficult situations than our own.

Action

For students and teachers who are inspired by the assembly and want to make a difference, here are some ideas:

- organise a Christian Aid Week collection at school. Perhaps you could ask students and staff to make a donation for the privilege of using the toilet/water fountain to celebrate the clean water and sanitation they enjoy? You can order an *Unleash Your Talent* fundraising pack at www.caweek.org for more great ideas and support on running an activity.
- students could design before and after posters, such as the ones drawn by Jeremiah, to show the changes they would like to make in their school, local community or the wider world.

*www.unicef.org.uk/campaigns/campaign_detail.asp?campaign=24&nodeid=campaign24§ion=9

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