

# WATER AND SANITATION: THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO 'URGH'

Water and sanitation may be two of the least attractive, least thought about and least discussed aspects of life, but they are also two of the most important.

In Europe, we each use around 200 litres of water per day for washing, drinking, cooking and flushing the toilet.

People in the developing world use around 10 litres of water per day. People living in slums may only have access to half this amount, and there's no guarantee the water will be clean. For many people around the world, fresh water and adequate toilet and cleaning facilities are luxuries that simply don't exist.

Christian Aid has a vision: an end to poverty **now**. For that to happen, people's urgent and most basic needs for water and sanitation must be met. And it doesn't take a huge amount of money or effort for everyone in the world to have access to toilet and washing facilities and clean water. It's possible. And you can be a part of making it happen. Starting here, starting now, starting with the discussion you're about to have...

## Tell me more

Some facts:

- almost 13 per cent of people in the world don't have access to water that's safe to use<sup>1</sup>
- nearly two-fifths of the world's population lack decent toilets<sup>2</sup>
- every day, 5,000 children die as a result of drinking dirty water and not having proper sanitation.<sup>3</sup>

In Matopeni (pn. mat-oh-penny), one of around 200 slums in Nairobi, Kenya, people are forced to drink dirty water that they

**'A few of us think differently. We think that you can get out of this situation if you bring people together and make a change for yourself.'**

Catherine Kithuku and her friend Veronica Milla set up the group Arise and Shine in Matopeni to help people, mostly single mothers, have a better quality of life through rubbish collection and education

know is likely to make them ill because they have no other option. Despite attempts by the residents to build drains and toilets, conditions are squalid. Children play amid raw sewage and rats. During heavy rain, homes flood with sewage water. Diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and pneumonia thrive in the damp conditions in which mosquitoes are rife. And family members have no privacy as they wash and go to the toilet in the same one room they share with the rest of their family for sleeping, eating and living.

### Kick off

Once you've given your group some background to the issue using the information above, try the following icebreaker to get them warmed up.

### Quick quiz (correct answers in bold)

1. How long, approximately, can a person live without food?  
a) 2 weeks                      **b) 5 weeks**                      c) 10 weeks
2. How long, approximately, can a person live without water?  
a) 3 days                      **b) 5 days**                      c) 7 days
3. How much of the earth's surface is water?  
a) 20 per cent                      **b) 71 per cent**                      c) 95 per cent
4. How much of the earth's water is suitable for drinking?  
**a) 1 per cent**                      b) 25 per cent                      c) 100 per cent
5. Gross but true: how many viruses can one gramme of faeces contain?<sup>4</sup>  
a) 400 million                      b) 1 million                      **c) 10 million.**

### Talk it out

These questions can be used to prompt conversation or steer the discussion if it veers wildly off course. For more tips on facilitating discussions, go to: [www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasessions](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasessions)

1. What do you think are the risks of not having clean water and basic sanitation?
2. How many times a day do you use water? How would you feel if you knew this water was dirty and disease-ridden? What might you do differently?
3. Do we value water enough in the UK and Ireland or do we take it for granted? Does it matter? Can being careful with our water usage help people living without access to clean water?
4. How important is choice to us when it comes to what we drink? Is this choice a luxury?
5. What would you do if there were no basic toilets available at your home, your work or your school/college? What effect would going to the toilet in a bag and throwing it out of a window have on you (in Matopeni, this is called a 'flying toilet')?

**'I have learned to appreciate where I am right now. I know that my future will be different. I believe in change... I pray for change. I pray to live a clean, comfortable life with privacy. I pray to see that these people's lives will change beyond recognition. But most of all I pray for clean water.'**

Catherine Kithuku, Arise and Shine founder, Matopeni

6. Is having access to clean water and sanitation a basic human right? Is it more important than the right to education or the right to freedom?
7. Look up John 14:23-29 and Revelation 21:1-6. How can the Holy Spirit help us to love the people in Matopeni and others living in poverty? How might this contribute to a changed earth now, as we wait for the ultimate new earth of which the Revelation passage speaks?
8. 'Fighting poverty is not about building sanitation blocks. It's about changing people's consciousness.' Humphrey Oduor is chairman of the youth group in Kiambiu slum, Nairobi. How far do you agree with Humphrey's statement? Is having access to clean water enough? How important is health and hygiene education?
9. Aren't most of today's sanitation and water problems caused by the rapid growth of the world's population? Shouldn't we look at trying to reduce population growth and then it might be easier to provide access to clean water and sanitation?
10. Lack of basic sanitation can lead to children getting sick, people spending precious time fetching water rather than working or going to school, and hopes of communities leading lives free of poverty being destroyed. Poor sanitation perpetuates poverty, but poverty in turn perpetuates poor sanitation. How can this cycle be broken?

**'You need to change your mind first. I am in the slum, but my mind is not in the slum.'** Elizabeth Waithera, deputy chairman of Kiambiu youth group. The youth group runs clean-up days and clears rubbish in Kiambiu for a small fee

## Reflect

It has been proven that, with the will and enough people working together, life can change. In Kiambiu (pn. key-am-byou), life has improved since residents worked with Christian Aid partner MNU to build toilet and washing facilities, run a rubbish-collection service and install a clean water supply.

Kiambiu's youth group is playing a key part in cleaning up its community. Brighton Onyango is a member of the youth group and is part of a team of rubbish collectors. 'I feel good because nowadays I don't sit idle,' he says.

Now MNU hopes to begin the same work with residents in Matopeni. Crucially, it is people living in the slums that are changing their own situations. And like the residents of Kiambiu and Matopeni, we too can use our talents, time and energy to make a difference in the world.

After reading the above to the group, watch *Give Your Talent: Let's End Poverty* from the Christian Aid Week DVD-rom.

## Less talk, more action

Through refusing to accept the status quo and working together to bring change, you can stand alongside the people of Kiambiu and Matopeni. Many of the give, act and pray ideas that follow are based around people coming together and using their talents to make a difference.

## Give

Use the talents in your group to raise money and awareness of the issues that the people of Matopeni face. How about organising a talent show, selling handmade cards or cakes, putting on a gig, or running an art gallery? Or give everyone in the group £5 with the challenge to increase it (eg buy the basic tools and set up a car-washing service or a hair-and-nail salon). Could people in church 'sponsor' a young person, providing practical support as well as the £5 set-up cost?

For more ideas, order the *Unleash Your Talent* fundraising pack from [www.caweek.org](http://www.caweek.org) or call 0808 0005 005 quoting F1930.

## Act

Addressing the symptoms of poverty is one thing, but for poverty to be over, the causes need tackling too. Order postcards from Christian Aid asking the prime minister to address issues such as climate change and tax dodging that are keeping countries poor. Visit [www.caweek.org](http://www.caweek.org) to order or call 0808 0005 005 quoting F1919.

## Pray

Place a cup of fresh water and a cup of salt water on a table. Get people, in turn, to dip a finger into both cups (or take a sip if they're brave!). As they lick their fingers and taste the fresh water get them to thank God for the gift of clean, fresh water. As they taste the salty water and notice the contrast, get them to imagine having to drink this water every day, knowing it may make them sick. Afterwards, pray together for the people around the world who have to drink dirty water. Also pray for Christian Aid partners working with local people to secure clean water.

Get people to pick a quote, statistic, person or thought that has struck them during the session and write it on a small piece of card. These pieces of card can then be stuck by kitchen sinks, in bathrooms or loos. Each time people use water/the toilet, they will be reminded to be thankful and to pray for the people and issues they've heard about.

## Find out more

**Watch:** *Christian Aid Week: Let's End Poverty*, a short film about Kiambiu and Matopeni and what can be achieved when people work together to bring about change.

**Read:** *Let's End Poverty* – Rosalind McLaughlin's story about her visit to Kenya, from the worship materials.  
(Both items available on the Christian Aid Week DVD-rom).

For more sessions like this helping you to discuss some of the biggest issues facing our world today, visit [www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasesions](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/sofasesions)

**'When we give money to Christian Aid towards places like these it's important to understand that we're not building dams, we're not buying taps, we're not buying pipes and pumps, we are saving lives, precious lives.'** Delroy Powell, Christian Aid supporter who visited Kiambiu and Matopeni

**'In life you look at what is there for you and ask, "What can I contribute? How can I leave a mark?" I believe in people, in exchanges, and we must make use of them.'** Humphrey Oduor, chairman of Kiambiu youth group, who spends his time inspiring young people to use their talents and energy to make a difference to their lives and the lives of others

1. [www.unicef.org/wash/index\\_3951.html](http://www.unicef.org/wash/index_3951.html)
2. [www.unicef.org/wash/index\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/wash/index_statistics.html)
3. [www.unicef.org.uk/campaigns/campaign\\_detail.asp?campaign=24&nodeid+campaign24&section=9](http://www.unicef.org.uk/campaigns/campaign_detail.asp?campaign=24&nodeid+campaign24&section=9)
4. [www.wateraid.org/international/what\\_we\\_do/the\\_need/disease/default.asp](http://www.wateraid.org/international/what_we_do/the_need/disease/default.asp)