

Unit 9: EVERY DROP COUNT

THE BURDEN OF THIRST

Millions of women carry water long distances. If they had a tap by their door, whole societies would be transformed.

A

Aylito Binayo's feet know the mountain. Even at four in the morning, she can run down the rocks to the river by starlight alone and climb the steep mountain back up to her village with a container of water on her back. She has made this journey three times a day since she was a small child. So has every other woman in her village of Foro, in the Konso district of south-western Ethiopia in Africa. Binayo left school when she was eight years old, in part because she had to help her mother fetch water from the Toiro River. The water is unsafe to drink; every year that the drought continues, the river carries less water, and its flow is reduced. But it is the only water Foro has ever had.

B

In developed parts of the world, people turn on a tap and out pours abundant, clean water. Yet nearly 900 million people in the world have no access to clean water. Furthermore, 2.5 billion people have no safe way to get rid of human waste. Polluted water and lack of proper hygiene cause disease and kill 3.3 million people around the world annually, most of them children. In southern Ethiopia and in northern Kenya, a lack of rain over the past few years has made even dirty water hard to find. But soon, for the first time, things are going to change.

C

Bringing clean water close to villagers' homes is the key to the problem. Communities where clean water becomes accessible and plentiful are transformed. All the hours previously spent hauling water can be used to cultivate more crops, raise more animals or even start a business. Families spend less time sick or caring for family members who are unwell. Most important, not having to collect water means girls can go to school and get jobs. The need to fetch water for the family, or to take care of younger siblings while their mother goes, usually prevents them ever having this experience.

D

But the challenges of bringing water to remote villages like those in Konso are overwhelming. Locating water underground and then reaching it by means of deep wells requires geological expertise and expensive, heavy machines. Abandoned wells and water projects litter the villages of Konso. In similar villages around the developing world, the biggest problem with water schemes is that about half of them break down soon after the groups that built them move on. Sometimes technology is used that can't be repaired locally, or spare parts are available only in the capital.

E

Today, a UK-based international non-profit organization called WaterAid is tackling the job of bringing water to the most remote villages of Konso. Their approach combines technologies proven to last - such as building a sand dam to capture and filter rainwater that would otherwise drain away. But the real innovation is that WaterAid believes technology is only part of the solution. Just as important is involving the local community in designing, building and maintaining new water projects. Before beginning any project, WaterAid asks the community to create a WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene) committee of seven people. The committee

works with WaterAid to plan projects and involve the village in construction. Then it maintains and runs the project.

F

The people of Konso, who grow their crops on terraces they have dug into the sides of mountains, are famous for hard work. In the village of Orbesho, residents even constructed a road themselves so that drilling machinery could come in. Last summer, their pump, installed by the river, was being motorised to push its water to a newly built reservoir on top of a nearby mountain. From there, gravity will carry it down in pipes to villages on the other side of the mountain. Residents of those villages have each given some money to help fund the project. They have made concrete and collected stones for the structures. Now they are digging trenches to lay pipes. If all goes well, Aylito Binayo will have a tap with safe water just a three-minute walk from her front door.

Questions 1–6

The reading passage has six paragraphs, A–F.

Choose the correct heading for each paragraph from the list of headings below.

List of Headings

- i Why some plans have failed
- ii A rural and urban problem
- iii A possible success
- iv Explaining a new management style
- v Some relevant statistics
- vi A regular trip for some people
- vii Treating people for disease
- viii How water can change people's lives

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| 1 Paragraph A | 4 Paragraph D |
| 2 Paragraph B | 5 Paragraph E |
| 3 Paragraph C | 6 Paragraph F |

Questions 7–11

Complete the sentences below.

*Choose **NO MORE THAN ONE WORD AND/OR A NUMBER** from the passage for each answer.*

- 7 The water levels in the Toiro River are falling because of
- 8 Globally, the number of people who die each year as a result of using dirty water is
- 9 When families have clean water, they can spend more time growing
- 10 Specialist knowledge and equipment are needed to dig
- 11 WaterAid uses a dam made of to capture rainwater.

Questions 12–13

*Choose **TWO** letters, A–E.*

*Which **TWO** of these activities were performed by the villagers of Orbesho?*

- A building a transport route
- B digging a reservoir
- C gathering building materials
- D making pipes
- E fitting taps