

Guinea: Water that brings life, not death

In Canada, the death of thousands of children due to the lack of food, clean water or simple medical care would make news headlines. But in countries such as Guinea, it's all too common. That's why part of the proceeds from this year's 30 Hour Famine will go toward improving the survival and growth of Guinean children under the age of five.

It's staggering what a little help can do for a village filled with children. Look at the Chakun community in Guinea, where the lack of potable water meant people once depended on ponds and dugouts for all their water. They shared the life-giving liquid with animals, which urinate and defecate where they stand.

Such contaminated water can kill the people that it's meant to sustain, especially very small children. The all-too-common likelihood of water-borne diseases such as guinea worm, leave many children screaming in pain.

No water, no cooking

In Chakun, Jayon Ngarigma, mother of nine, remembers the scourge of guinea worm in her village. "The children used to cry a lot," she recalls. "You were in such pain that you couldn't even go out and ease yourself."



"Our children missed school most of the time," remembers another mother. "There were times when there was no food for them to eat in the morning, because there was no water to cook with." As a result, women from Chakun used to travel to the river to fetch water. They would leave at around 3.30 a.m. and returned around 10.30 a.m. That was for only one bucket of water. If they wanted any more, they would have to leave after lunch and try to make it back to prepare supper.

Clean water changes lives

Chakun is a completely different community since World Vision drilled a borehole for the people. "The day we saw the drillers coming, we were all really excited and were looking forward to the future. No longer would we have to walk for miles to collect water," Ama Bekpeema recalled.

The entire community followed the drillers to the drill site and waited. The first day, the drillers hit dry well like other groups which had tried before. World Vision did not pull out when this attempt failed. "The desperate look in the eyes of the people as they waited throughout the period of drilling, compelled us to go," recalls Evans Dagban, a World Vision staff member. At the second try, the drillers hit water and the celebration began. It's continued every since.

"Now we sleep throughout the night," says Ama Bekpeema. "We are able to assist our husbands on the farm to sow maize, groundnuts and guinea corn. May God bless the people who gave us the water so they will continue to help us."

NOTE TO EDITOR: Improved access to safe water is only one of the things World Vision is planning for children in Guinea. Other improvements include increased micronutrient intake through dietary diversification, supplementation and fortification; improved prevention and management of malaria; improved management of pneumonia; improved prevention of vaccine-preventable diseases; improved prevention and management of diarrhea; improved prevention and control of intestinal parasites; improved sanitation and access to proper toilets; increased availability and access to stable and diverse range of nutritious food sources throughout the year in the household.

Eat nothing. Do something.

April 16-17, 2010

