



Living Waters Intl

Living Waters Newsletter April 6, 2006

Lake Victoria's Lighthouse of H2OPE
Kaswanga/Wanyama
Rusinga, Mbita
Kenya

July 2005, Daryl and Mary Jo Oft, owners of Diversified Solutions traveled to Kaswanga, Kenya to participate in a global evangelism effort. This became a life changing experience for them, and they have shared their many experiences with hundreds of people in Arizona, California, Oregon and Washington.

This is the experience of Daryl Oft and Shawn Simmons, owner of Simmons Landscaping, who returned to Kaswanga in April to assist in bringing fresh drinking water to a community that had never experienced a drink of fresh, clean pure water and to install drip irrigation systems for family size garden plats to assist in alleviating the famine that is sweeping across Africa. Here is their story.

On April 9th, a very dear friend Shawn Simmons and I departed Phoenix to travel to Kaswanga to assess what it would take initiate and implement a fresh water system for the villagers of Kaswanga and Wanyama communities. It was my understanding that they had not had fresh water for over 3 years because the water system they had in place was no longer functional due to all of the water technicians dying of AIDS. Well, in a sense that was true, however, not completely correct.

We were prepared to install a water filtration system that had been donated by the non-profit organization H.E.L.P. (Humanitarian Emergency Logistic Preparedness). The system works by means of breaking down salt molecules and in the process produces three byproducts; chlorine gas which purifies the water as the gas is introduced into the flow of water; bleach which is used to disinfect the water containers used by the villagers; and lye which is used to disinfect the very primitive latrines.

Our plan was to install this system and draw contaminated water from a 50 gallon container and transfer fresh water into a clean 50 gallon container, thus providing at least some clean water.

Our second objective was to educate and provide four families with garden plot size drip irrigation systems to enhance their edible vegetable intake. Most of the local food source is fish, maize, sorghum and a small variety of vegetables. We were donated four systems by New Directions International, a non-profit organization from North Carolina that provides these services to drought stricken areas of Africa and India. This system is able to grow enough vegetables in a garden plot 20' X 20' to sustain an entire family with only 5 gallons of water a week.

Our third objective was to deliver donated medical supplies to the local medical clinic. Physician Sales and Services donated approximately \$4000. worth of equipment and supplies to Tom Mboya Medical Clinic. We were surprised to find out that medical clinics in Kenya are funded by local taxes only; therefore, in an area of such poverty, a clinic receives only the most essential of medical needs. Typhoid, malaria and AIDS medications are about the only thing that is available at the clinic. The supplies that were taken over were a real God send. It was quite an extra expense to take the supplies as they all had to be paid as extra luggage with the airlines.

So this was our objective; provide some means of clean water; start a pilot program of garden plots to help alleviate the starvation of the African people; and deliver much needed medical supplies.

We pre-organized our arrival with ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), a non-profit international relief agency, which provided us with technical assistance for the assessment for water needs and provided us with a 4 wheel drive vehicle and driver of national origin. They arranged a water engineer to study the project and to provide project phasing, equipment needs, and ADRA provided material cost for phase 2 of this water project.

We arrived in Nairobi and spent the first day meeting with the appropriate representatives and completing our shopping list of items that would be needed for the project. We met with the local Rotary club to introduce our project to them as a potential funding source for the continuation of this project.

The next day we started on a very dangerous and long trip across Kenya to the western border. The roads are very rough and the driving is something out of; well, out of Africa. Traffic and pedestrian fatalities are very high and we were most grateful for a safe trip.

Our first day on the island consisted of a variety of meetings and overall assessment of the condition of the water infrastructure. We met with the SUBA District Water Minister, who provided valuable information concerning the dire need of the area we were going to. The Kenya government recently completed a national study called the "Kenyan Community Development Fund Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper" which included water priorities across Kenya. The SUBA District, specifically Rusinga Island (our location) was ranked number 2 in priority need. Unfortunately, this does not mean that the government will financially address this need, it just documents the need. We also met with the Lake Victoria South Water Service Board, Administration teams of each of the following schools; Tom Mboya Secondary School, Wanyama Primary School, Kaswanga Primary School, Agiro Primary School, Tom Mboya Medical Clinic Administration, Kaswanga/Wanyama Water Committee, Kaswanga/Wanyama Irrigation Committee and then a formal presentation to the entire communities of Kaswanga and Wanyama. We just spent one of four days entirely in meetings and we initially felt frustrated that no work had been accomplished.

We soon understood that this was just standard procedure in getting anything done and soon realized how very important all of this became. As we were ready to start work on the project the second day, we found we had unlimited resources of local labor to accomplish anything we needed.

On Friday Shawn and I initially worked on planning the water purification system implementation. This was helpful to both of us but it also brought about 35 villagers to the scene, each with their individual ideas of how to make the project work. Their input at times was valuable but every minor decision they would come to would first include a discussion of 35 individual inputs on something as simple as how to cut the wood for the water tank stand. It became very evident that we needed strict focus so Shawn and I divided the group in two. Shawn focused on the garden and irrigation program and I focused on the water purification system.

There is a windmill that is about 500 feet from the shores of Lake Victoria which in the past has supplied lake water to the Tom Mboya secondary school and the Tom Mboya Medical Clinic. The windmill drew water through a 2 inch galvanized pipe that reached into the lake. However, Lake Victoria's water table has dropped so dramatically in the past 5 years from prolonged drought that the end of the water line is 200 feet up on the shore. The windmill cistern casing is cracked and the recharge rate is about 50 gallons of water per hour. The pumping shaft has many small holes in it so for each stroke of pumping a significant amount of water is released back into the cistern.

The water is pumped to a holding tank that provides a small and insufficient amount of contaminated water to the Tom Mboya secondary school that housed about 450 young men. The water from Lake Victoria is highly contaminated with bacteria and parasites. The school continually has outbreaks of typhoid and other waterborne diseases due to the bad water. For those who can download pictures I have attached a picture of the water in a collection container that was used in the kitchen that serves the school.

The water is stored in a large mortar tank that seldom holds more than a couple of hundred gallons but has the capacity to hold 10,000 gallons of water. School had just let out for their official one month break and this tank provided us with a resource of collected water.

David Rotich, (ADRA representative) and I were able to go to Mbita and negotiate the purchase of a new 4000 liter water tank and spent 4 hours getting a variety of fittings placed in the tank. It was a real challenge to get something as simple as a threaded pipe nipple and elbows for fittings but eventually we pieced together what we needed and the tank was delivered to Tom Mboya School. A platform for the tank to be elevated had been erected and was soon in place next to the large mortar tank.

After a much-focused assembly of the purification equipment we were ready to connect the power. There of course is no electricity, so the system is operated off of a 12 volt motorcycle battery that is charged by a solar panel, all of

which was transported from the U.S. Prayer was offered over the working of the system and with a few modifications the system started pumping fresh clean water into the new tank. Everyone, including ourselves was amazed. The system ran for an hour and then we decided to check the water for purity. The test kits showed perfectly clean safe water.

We had a charcoal filter and tap placed on the opposite end of the tank and now for the first time ever, the residents of Kaswanga and Wanyama were experiencing their very first drink of pure clean water. You can not imagine the feeling of joy that Shawn and I experienced as we saw what was taking place.

We had the villagers refrain from using the water until the next day as we wanted to retest the purity and supply. At the church service the next day Shawn presented 5 liters of pure clean water to the pastor, head elder, and 3 others on the platform. They all took drinks and then passed the bottles out to the congregation. We have pictures and video of them passing drinks to the children and the expressions on their faces of the first drink of clean water. It was a moment that brought both joy and tears to Shawn and myself.

The community named the water project after us, but after discussion with them they agreed that by our request the project would be called "Living Waters". This has both a physical and spiritual application and after all, it was not about what we did, but about what God has done.

We expected Sunday to be relatively easy as we thought we would just provide training to the elected water technicians and fine tune the system and help with a couple of more garden plots. Well, never go to Africa on a mission project and expect anything like relaxation. Our day ended up very full with having to remove the elevated tank and establish a secure foundation for the tank to sit on. Additional adjustments to the purification system and training were required and Shawn spent his day with garden and drip irrigation development.

When the day was over we were able to experience the joy of villagers lining up to get water in their containers, see the excellent gardens that had been tilled, planted and the irrigation working and said tearful goodbyes to old and new friends. We were informed by a USAID/Kenya representative that arrived to see our project, that this was the very first time that the people of Rusinga had ever experienced a drink of fresh, clean pure water.

I was able to connect with most of the friends I made 10 months earlier as well as some new ones. Shawn made friends with so many people and told me that this had been a life changing experience for him.

We returned to Nairobi, along a very treacherous route and with many bumps and bruises. God worked mightily with us and we accomplished 5 days of work in two even with both of us having bouts of dysentery and a miserable respiratory infection that I developed.

Our trip back was as eventful as our experience at Kaswanga. Our plane was delayed for mechanical problems while we sat on the tarmac for 4 ½ hours late Tuesday night. This caused a cascade of missed flights at every connection so we arrived somewhat late. We were totally exhausted, but we had a satisfaction and joy in our heart that can not be expressed in any terms other than to experience this for oneself.

I would be amiss if I stopped our story here, but I cannot. We were able to make a very small yet significant difference in the local community with fresh water, drip irrigation garden plots and medical supplies. This phase will only provide for a very few villagers, as there are approximately 10,000 residents on Rusinga.

Lake Victoria's Lighthouse of H2OPE has 5 identified priorities.

- Clean sustainable water
- Appropriate medical services
- Agricultural garden plots
- Educational support for the 4 local schools
- Orphan support with food and education

We have completed Phase One. Phase 2 will include repairs to the wind mill cistern, extending the water line 300 feet into Lake Victoria, placing water lines to the Medical Clinic and adding a new water tank and purification system there, and 2 water kiosks in the local village center. We also want to return with 50 (eventually 1500 drip systems to provide for the approximate 1500 families in the 2 communities) additional garden drip irrigation systems and additional water purification systems and spare parts.

Phase 2 has been engineered, and material cost established by ADRA. It is my passion to complete Phase 2 before the summer droughts hit hard again. I must raise \$30,000 to complete Phase 2.

ADRA has accepted oversight of this project, yet the funding must be provided. I ask each of you to prayerfully consider what you can do to help this project. Our goal is to raise the money by June so the project can start early June and be completed by late July. I am returning to help with the completion of this phase of the project if the money can be raised. One hundred percent of your tax deductible donation is directly applied to this project. There are no administrative fees associated with this and the labor is a labor of love and donated.

Your contributions may be made out to Living Waters International and mailed to Living Waters International, 1107 S. Beeline # 4 Payson, AZ 85541

One time gifts are needed to immediately raise the needed amount to complete Phase 2; however, continuing support is even more important. Your contribution will defiantly contribute to save lives and improve the quality of the lives of many children. The average lifespan in Rusinga is 38 years old and this is unacceptable. Won't you please consider helping this worthy cause both now and on a continuing basis?

I could write this kind of report on each of these needs but for now I am focusing on water because this must come first. My vision is to assist this area in such a manner that it does become a "lighthouse of hope" in the lake area, and other communities will see what can happen when people work together and lifestyle changes are made.