

Stories and solutions: water and sanitation

Stories from WaterAid, [Issue Sheet: Children and WaterAid](#)

RESULTS
the power to end poverty

A safe water supply

Twelve year old Erika Makalli lives in Mbalawala, Tanzania. “Before we got clean water in the village my life was so very different,” she says. “I was constantly sick and had horrible, itchy skin because I could never wash properly. I was always suffering with stomach cramps and diarrhoea. I had to get up at 4am and walk a long distance to find water. It took two hours and I could only collect a small amount of water to take home. That meant that Mum had to spend most of the day finding water so that we’d have enough to drink and cook with.

I used to try and rush to get to school and wouldn’t be able to wash or have any breakfast beforehand. Most of the time I missed school altogether because I was sick or just exhausted. There were so many diseases in this village. In fact the school sometimes closed down because so many children were sick it wasn’t worth opening it.

I now wake up, brush my teeth and go to get water from the tapstand. Then I wash and prepare breakfast with the clean water. We always wash our hands now before eating which keeps everything clean and healthy. I don’t have to take water to school with me as the school also has a tapstand now too.

If I still had dirty water I wouldn’t be going to school anymore. I probably wouldn’t have had any real education at all. Also, some of my friends would probably have died from the diseases we used to get. Life would be miserable.

Now I feel I can at last look forward to a brighter future. Perhaps I will be a health and hygiene teacher when I leave school.”



Learning to live healthily

Ten year old Vasanthi (seen standing on the steps in this photo) attends Marachipatti Primary School in Tamil Nadu, India. The school did not used to have any latrines and as a result the pupils were frequently ill. In 1999 WaterAid and its local partner Gramalaya built a latrine block there and helped set up a school health club. The club is made up of five committees of children with designated responsibilities for water maintenance, campus cleaning, toilet maintenance, food and classroom cleaning.



Vasanthi explains what life at school used to be like: “Before we had the toilets we had to use the thorny bushes on the outskirts of the village. Sometimes snakes would come and disturb us. I would run away as quickly as possible. This wasn’t much fun. Through the personal hygiene committee we have learnt to cut our nails and wear clean clothes. If somebody else comes to school looking dirty we ask their parents to send them cleaner next time. We also tell our parents to wash their hair, clean their teeth and wash their hands with soap after handling garbage.”

Vasanthi’s headmaster says the health programme has led to great improvements at the school: “I’ve seen a tremendous change in the children. The most important things are that there used to be ten to fifteen children absent per day due to diarrhoea. Now none of the children are absent.”