

BRINGING SAFE WATER TO TCHOLE MOYE



"We used to have to share the same open pond as our cattle," says Kelemwa Abera, who lives in the village of Tchole Moye, in the district of Bereh Aleltu, 45 kms north of Addis Ababa. "You can imagine how polluted the water would get with animals entering the water and defecating in it with no one to stop or control them. My four children and I would often get diarrhoea, and I believe it was because of the water."

This situation has since changed for the villagers of Tchole Moye thanks to a project implemented with the assistance of UNICEF. In early 2002 the village received its first source of clean water by way of a hand pump fitted well, and this has meant a world of difference to its community, particularly to its women and children.

"Today we do not have to put up with dirty water anymore, thanks to this well. I live two minutes away so the location is also convenient. My children and I now drink clean water, and it is beautiful. This new water is clean and fresh, and with this fence around it, we know that the well is protected from outside elements. Our lives are much better now."

Bereh Aleltu is a wereda (district) located 45 kms north of Addis Ababa on the Dessie road. It is a rural farming community with a population of 142,608. When UNICEF, in collaboration with the wereda administration, began developing water projects there in 1994, the safe water supply coverage in the wereda was estimated to be less than one per cent. By mid 2002 the coverage level has increased to 12 per cent. Much of this increase has been achieved with UNICEF assistance.

Danye, 11, and Assefa Shambel, 9, live in the village of Haro in Bereh Aleltu wereda. Eighty families live in their village. Hygiene training is an integral part of the outreach activities conducted by wereda development workers responsible for water projects. Agents promote hand washing with soap and clean water as a simple and effective means of preventing water related diseases. The boys wash their hands with the clean water that they have poured from the hand pump fitted well that was installed in Haro with UNICEF assistance, after helping their father on his farm.



Prior to the installation of the well, residents of Haro would have to walk several kilometers to the nearest river to collect their water. Like Kelemwa in Tchole Moye, they shared their water source with cattle and wild animals. The water was often polluted with excrement from its various users. During the long dry season the water level in the river would dry up to barely a trickle. Some years it would disappear altogether. At such times the residents of Haro used to dig holes in the riverbed to extract the

water below. The installation of the UNICEF-assisted well has brought an end to their travails.

Abass Siraj works for the Bereh Aleltu district administration as the programme officer responsible for coordinating UNICEF-assisted activities. "When UNICEF began helping us, the clean water supply in this district was virtually nothing," Abass says. "Clean water was only available in town, and even there the supply from the small pump was irregular and inadequate. UNICEF's assistance has therefore been a blessing for the people who live in the vicinity of the water schemes. The health benefits of providing access to clean drinking water cannot be overestimated, particularly in a district where there is no doctor. We only have five nurses and seven health assistants serving close to 150,000 people."

Since 1994 a total of 28 hand pump fitted hand-dug wells and 9 spring protection schemes have been completed with UNICEF-assistance for the people of Bereh Aleltu wereda, and more are planned within the coming months.

Only 31 per cent of households in Ethiopia have access to a safe water supply, according to official figures, where access to safe water is defined as 20 liters per person per day within a distance of 1-2 kilometers. The effective coverage is even lower as 30 - 60 per cent of existing water schemes are not functioning. As evidenced by the situation in the district of Bereh Aleltu, located close to the Ethiopian capital, there are also considerable gaps between rural and urban coverage levels.

UNICEF's objective in the Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) Programme for the present five-year country programme (2002 – 2006) is to assist the Government of Ethiopia to increase water coverage from 31 to 40 per cent by 2006. UNICEF's contribution will be the construction of 1550 new and rehabilitation of 850 old water supply schemes. Due consideration will also be given to create higher awareness of water, sanitation and hygiene issues to ensure higher standards of hygiene practices.

A major highlight of the WES programme is the introduction of three new drilling rigs by UNICEF, each capable of drilling 12 shallow wells in one month at a cost of \$2,600. This is compared to \$6,200 for a well drilled by private contractor, with only 20-25 wells drilled annually. Using these drilling rigs UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry and Regional Bureaus of Water Resources, aims to achieve the targets set for 2006 in the country programme.

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