



WATER OF LIFE

RWANDA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compassion has been working in Rwanda since 1979, and currently supports 72,421 children through 288 church-based projects. Compassion partners with churches to help them provide Rwandan children with the opportunity to rise above their circumstances and become all God has created them to be. Compassion staff have identified the most pressing needs in the country and incorporated these as priorities in the overall strategy for holistic development in Rwanda.

31 percent of the Rwandan population, 3.4 million people, do not have access to safe water. This has a serious impact on health as well as infant mortality, with 3,000 children in Rwanda dying from diarrhoea every year.¹

Compassion therefore intends to provide Water of Life filters to every Compassion-registered child in Rwanda. Phase one of this initiative funded the successful distribution of Water of Life filters to 19,272 Compassion-assisted children and their families in Eastern Rwanda. In addition, the 211 Compassion projects in Rwanda also received Water of Life filters to provide safe water to children on project days. This initiative is allowing a further 7,896 Compassion-assisted children, 39,480 siblings and 15,792 caregivers who are located in the southern districts of Rwanda to participate in Compassion's Water of Life programme.

Compassion's Water of Life units are based on the same technology developed for kidney dialysis. Each filter is made up of tiny micro tubes with pores hundreds of times smaller than the diameter of a human hair. These pores remove deadly bacteria and allow only safe water to pass through for drinking. After pouring dirty water into the bucket from piped sources or lakes, rivers, ponds or puddles, the water flows through the filter and comes out completely safe to drink.



ACTIVITY REPORT

PROJECTS	Compassion child development centres in southern and central Rwanda
INITIATIVE	Water of Life Rwanda
RESPOND NUMBER	RW-014484
BENEFICIARIES	7,896 Compassion-assisted children and 15,792 caregivers
FUNDING	£4,487
START DATE	Winter 2014

Through this RESPOND Initiative, children and their families in four districts in the southern province of Rwanda have been given safe drinking water for life. At the time of implementation, two new projects were opened in the benefiting districts. These projects were added to the original beneficiary list, to total 30 projects as follows:

DISTRICT	PROJECTS	FILTERS
Nyanza	RW-149 EMLR Nyanza	209
Huye	RW-151 Kibingo	221
Huye	RW-156 Butare	270
Ruhango	RW-157 EMLR Ruhango	294
Gisagara	RW-176 EMLR Ramba	232
Huye	RW-258 Taba	292
Gisagara	RW-336 ADEPR Kabeza	289
Huye	RW-340 Cyarwa	273
Huye	RW-355 Kinyamakara	265
Huye	RW-359 Ruhashya	258
Gisagara	RW-364 Save	348
Nyanza	RW-368 Cyegera	282
Ruhango	RW-369 ADEPR Mukingi	269
Gisagara	RW-370 Gisagara	261
Ruhango	RW-373 ADEPR Ngurukizi	258
Huye	RW-431 Ngoma	270
Ruhango	RW-441 UEBR Mukoma	280
Huye	RW-530 Buya	216
Nyanza	RW-540 EPR Kavumu	246
Ruhango	RW-542 EPR Kinazi	250
Huye	RW-546 Mbazi	253
Ruhango	RW-558 EPR Munanira	250
Ruhango	RW-720 EAR Nyamagana	245
Nyanza	RW-722 EAR Hanika	244
Ruhango	RW-723 EAR Nyarugenge	241
Nyanza	RW-728 EAR Rukari	274
Huye	RW-734 Mutumba	271
Nyanza	RW-738 EAR Bugina	277
Huye	RW-739 Mubumbano	286
Huye	RW-770 Gahana	272
TOTAL	30	7,896

The implementation of this initiative began with the mobilisation of local community members and the hiring of a WaSH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) expert to conduct training with all the beneficiaries.

Caregivers of Compassion-assisted children were divided into WaSH accountability groups of about 20, according to their location. The training was conducted in different training centres. From January 2015, the groups began receiving training in the use of Water of Life filters for safe drinking water. In addition, they were taught about waterborne diseases and good hygiene and sanitation practices.

After the training, the filter distribution began. Each family was given a Water of Life unit which contains:

- ④ a filter and attached bucket
- ④ a second bucket to catch the now-safe water in a clean container
- ④ a syringe that is used for rinsing the filter with safe water

Through this initiative 47,376 children and 15,792 caregivers, more than those originally proposed, will directly benefit from the water filters. The beneficiaries' neighbours have also been able to access potable water from the filters, expanding the impact of the initiative.

The following objectives have been achieved through this initiative:

- ④ Improved quality of drinking water
- ④ Improved WaSH practices and community awareness about the importance of safe drinking water
- ④ Reduction in the incidences of waterborne illnesses among registered children and their family members

IMPACT

Although the importance of drinking safe water was felt by all, boiled water was previously a privilege enjoyed only by those who could afford to purchase firewood regularly. Purifying drinking water for the day's needs used to take hours, now it takes minutes. This initiative has simplified and broadened access to safe drinking water in 30 different communities.

The practice of drinking safe water has increasingly been embraced by the families of Compassion-supported children. The technology is deeply appreciated by the communities they have been distributed to. According to John Mukiza, the project director at RW-530, many other community members have paid frequent visits to the project office to enquire about how they can purchase their own filters.

The beneficiaries are sharing the filtered water with their neighbours. This is strengthening community bonds and represents a strong tool for unity and reconciliation in post genocide Rwanda.

In addition to this profound social benefit, the use of the water filters has also had major economic benefits for the beneficiaries. Money that would otherwise have been spent on firewood is being saved or used on food and school supplies instead.

“You do not need firewood when using water filters, therefore it even saves our environment. This activity has greatly elevated the image of the church and Compassion within the community and the local administration.”

*Philbert Mushimiyimana,
project director at RW-368*



The filters were transported to the designated projects before they were distributed to the beneficiaries



Beneficiaries were grouped in different WaSH accountability groups at each project to help ensure good hygiene and sanitation habits





Two beneficiary families with their Water of Life filters



INTERVIEWS

Interview with the project director at RW-530, John Mukiza Bipamba.

Please describe how the completed initiative will affect the lives of people in this community.

I have served at this project for 16 years. Working with children is a blessing from God. Lives in this community have been transformed through this initiative. Cases of children suffering from water-related illnesses have greatly declined from 7 - 15 cases a month, to 1 - 3. I believe this is also a reflection of what is happening in the wider community. Almost all the families who received water filter kits have been sharing the filtered water with their neighbours. Using firewood to boil water is the only alternative, yet it is not only expensive but it is also environmentally unfriendly. Due to this initiative, families no longer need to boil water and therefore do not need as much firewood.

What will be different for the beneficiaries now that the initiative has been completed?

Things are already different for beneficiaries. In this project, we have 207 Compassion-supported children. Before, sourcing drinking water for children on project days was not always easy. Even when we could provide potable water for the children, they spent most of their time in their homes where they could not access safe water. The initiative has addressed this by providing safe water in the homes of children as well as at the project.

How would you describe the impact of this initiative to those who made it possible?

We thank God for this initiative. In Huye district, firewood has always been a big issue. This initiative has not only enabled caregivers to gain access to safe water through the filters, but it has also facilitated the transformation of lives through improved lifestyles.

Interview with Dusabe Irene, a caregiver at RW-530.

What was your life like before this initiative?

I am 39 years old and live with my five children together with my husband. My children are Emmanuel Muhigo, 17 years old; Patrick Ndizihwe, 13 years old; Umuhiza Gloria, 10 years old; Mubiligi Hakizimana, 8 years old; and Ruganga Bahati, 6 years old. Gloria is supported by the Compassion project, 2 kilometres from our home. It was not easy for us before, especially for the children. We knew it was not good to drink unboiled water but we had no choice. It was very expensive to boil water. We did not have the means to buy firewood which costs about FRW 1,000 [approximately £1] a bunch. We used to fetch water from the swamps about a kilometre from home, and the children would fall sick more often.

How are your lives different now that this initiative is complete?

We have been given a water filter that provides pure and safe potable water for our family. We have also been trained on sanitation and hygiene and the usage of the water filter. At home, we filter and use about 15 litres a day. My children no longer fall sick as they used to. Our lives have been transformed.

What will this initiative mean for your future or the future of others in the community?

The first time we heard about water filters was at the project. We knew their importance but we had no means to buy one. This initiative has provided us with filters that give us safe water. Each day, I filter five litres of water to give to our neighbours who cannot afford to boil water. Their perception regarding drinking safe water has also changed. I believe this initiative is beneficial to the entire community.

How would you describe the impact of this initiative to those who made it possible?

My young children used to be sickly. My youngest, Rugango, and Gloria fell sick more often. They had intestinal worms. I thank the donor and all those who made it possible because they no longer fall sick after receiving the water filter. I thank God for the support from the donors.