

SHARING

newsletter

Drinking and 'Living' Water Shared in African Villages

By Sarah Schafer

For years, Bolong Bojang worried about the lack of a clean, safe water source in Kitty, the Gambian village he leads.

Nigerian missionary Rev. Samuel Essein, sent by the LCMS to serve the Lutheran Church of the Gambia (LCTG) says the village faced water constraints for "a long time." In isolated areas of Gambia, waterborne illnesses afflicted villagers during the dry season when there are fewer sources of healthy drinking water. At one point, the LCTG's nursery school in Kitty experienced an outbreak of cholera.

"I have been approached several times with ... requests, out of which the clean water project took center stage," said Rev. Essein. With a grant from LCMS World Relief and Human Care, work on a 25-meter well in Kitty began in January. Much of the work was done by hand; a man was lowered into the hole each day and workers and residents manually lifted heavy concrete slabs into place before the well was cemented. Work lasted nearly 100 days. During this time, church members fed and housed the workers.

On May 1, the first hand pump in the village was presented to Bojang and Kitty residents. Rev. Essein preached while Evangelist Gabriel Gomez interpreted at the commissioning of the well. Now Bojang credits the Lutherans for ending his water worries.

"We can drink clean and safe water, wash and cook, and do dry season gardening. Lutherans, thank you!" said Mrs. Mendy, a community leader.

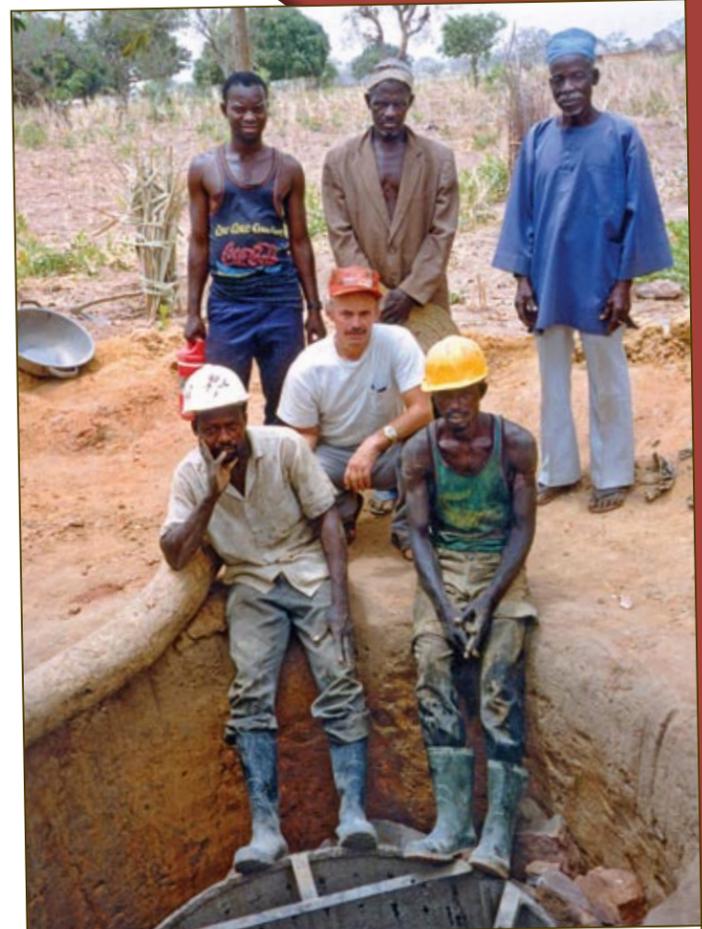
Rev. Essein says waterborne diseases have "given way to good health for both the pupils and the communities."

This is the second well LCTG has built with financial gifts from WR-HC donors in South Dakota, and with their continued support, a third will begin shortly in the village, Sifoe. Gambia's population is nearly 90 percent Muslim, and according to Rev. Essein, these well projects enable the church to form relationships within the community, share mercy in a tangible way, and show witness to Christ.

In the last five years, WR-HC has funded more than a dozen clean and safe water projects in nine African, Latin American, and Asian countries: Ghana, Kenya, Eritrea, Guinea, Nigeria, Peru, Haiti, Brazil, and China. These projects span from building irrigation channels to upgrading water systems on church properties that serve people in need. In Guinea, for example, the national church body built wells and toilet facilities in nearly 40 communities.

"Our prayers and thanks go to the donors," wrote Rev. Essein. "The LCTG was known before the provision of these wells, but today we are now known as a caring church. The water project in these communities are a sermon by itself that will go on and on..."

"I only pray God to bless the donors ... so that they can extend this blessing to other needy places ... where our fellow Lutheran brothers and sisters and school children are crying for this sort of blessing," said Pa Besenti, a LCTG church committee member in Kitty.



In Guinea, the national church body built wells, like this one, and toilet facilities in nearly 40 communities. With gifts from gracious LCMS World Relief and Human Care supporters, grants have funded more than a dozen clean and safe water projects in nine African, Latin American, and Asian countries.

Financial gifts are needed for other clean, safe water projects in Africa and throughout the world. Send gifts marked "A Cup of Water in His Name" to LCMS World Relief and Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO 63166-4438.

Give God Glory...

... for students at Immanuel Lutheran School in Macomb, Mich., who participated in the school's annual walk-a-thon! In order to satisfy family and friends' pledges, and to live out the school's theme "God loves the world!" about 350 students walked around the church and school carrying flags from each nation to proclaim that God cares for people of all nations.

"Putting our words into action in this way helps create awareness for the students of the needs of others, it teaches the students about God's love for the world, and it also is a great way to instill in students how to share God's love with others," said Principal Bob Christian.

Through the walk-a-thon, Immanuel students raised \$10,000 for LCMS World Relief and Human Care to continue aiding victims of springtime flooding in North Dakota.

"We learned that a lot of people are not as fortunate as we are," said fifth-grader, Jocelyn Levin. "It felt really good to be able to do this so that we could give to help other people who have had a disaster."



How Your Gifts Support WR-HC

You can help make projects like this possible with your continuing or new gifts to "Where Needed Most." Please use the envelope provided in this issue to send your gift to help LCMS World Relief and Human Care continue to reach out with Christ's mercy around the world. (Note: Thanks to your generous gifts, this publication may occasionally feature projects that have been fully funded.)

The mission of the church through LCMS World Relief and Human Care is to reach out in mercy and compassion to those in need, motivated by Christ and His Gospel, according to the Lutheran confession of the faith.

SHARING is available free to individuals and in quantities to congregations and other groups. SHARING is the bi-monthly newsletter of the disaster response and self-help development ministries of LCMS World Relief and Human Care, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; (314)965-9000 or (800)248-1930. Web site: www.lcms.org/worldrelief

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Flooded With Support From Coast to Coast

By Sarah Schafer

In March, Mark and Carol Osowski's Grafton, N.D., home was surrounded by flood water. So was Justin Halverson and Danielle Anderson's home in East Grand Forks, Minn. In Minot, N.D., where spring flooding is common, Shelley Schuster said, "we have never seen this type of damage to our property." Just a few months later, floods caused Sheila Williams' family to evacuate their remote Akiak, Alaska, home.

Amidst their preparations, anxious moments, and clean-up, the Osowski, Halverson, Schuster, Williams and many other families in the North Dakota, Minnesota, and Northwest districts experienced flooding of a different kind: They were flooded with care from LCMS members and congregations, and financial aid from LCMS World Relief and Human Care (WR-HC) donors.

The Osowski and Halverson families received WR-HC grant funds from their churches, which helped them build or reinforce dikes around their homes to keep flooding at bay. The Schuster family also received funds to help clean-up and repair their property.

"Your gift enabled us to build the dike and repair our yard. We cannot thank you enough for your kindness and generosity," wrote Danielle Anderson, in a note to WR-HC.

Families in Alaska received stoves, insulation, and cleaning supplies from Alaska Mission for Christ (AMC), thanks in part to a grant from WR-HC. As AMC's Rev. Corbie Cross helped unload items, he overheard one woman say something he'd never heard in the 10 years he has worked in the Alaskan bush, "I am about ready to cry, I am so happy." The woman showed Cross her home, the hardest hit in the village. Her husband kept saying, "I can't believe the church would help us! Please accept my many thanks."

"The call of the church is a call to compassion. For those affected by disaster, the church reaches out in the name of Christ with solid spiritual encouragement and real tangible



With prayers and gifts, LCMS World Relief and Human Care supporters assisted families in the highlighted states who were affected by floods. In May, Alaskan families received cleaning supplies and stoves to replace those destroyed by flooding. In March, more than \$33,540 helped North Dakotan families keep flood waters at bay and recover after waters receded. In June 2008, congregations in Indiana and Iowa received WR-HC support to assist members and their neighbors following spring flooding.

assistance," said Rev. Glenn F. Merritt, director of Disaster Response for WR-HC.

Since 2008, WR-HC's Disaster Response efforts to flooding alone has reached 33 cities from coast to coast. And, WR-HC has awarded more than \$269,518 in grant assistance to help LCMS members and communities recover from flooding.

"Because disasters often occur without prior warning, it is important that the church be prepared for an immediate response. A disaster reserve account allows the church to respond on a moment's notice bringing much needed help to congregations and communities. When the church has resources readily available there is a minimal delay in responding quickly," said Merritt.

Get involved in LCMS Disaster Response!

Sign-up for e-mail disaster alerts at www.lcms.org/enews. Look for the "Disaster News" e-newsletter under "LCMS World Relief and Human Care."

Register for congregation preparedness and volunteer training. More than 100 congregations have already participated in this straightforward, four-hour certification process. For more information, contact Rev. Merritt at glenn.merritt@lcms.org or 817-504-0078.

To provide immediate disaster response, WR-HC relies 100% on your gifts to respond to needs leading up to and following disasters. Send donations marked "Disaster Response" to LCMS World Relief and Human Care, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO, 63116-6861, or call 888-930-4438.

From the Executive Director

Wow. I've never been more honored, more thankful, or more thrilled to be a part of LCMS World Relief and Human Care than right now. Why? It is a privilege to behold our staff addressing and meeting the needs of real people, in real time, in the face of real challenge. Truly, we have been baptized for this moment. We've been tightening the belt, just like you. There are no pay raises this year. And you know what? I have not heard one rumble or one grumble out of our staff. NOT ONE. I think if they could, they'd do it all for free! Mercy is more than a job for these folks. It's their Christian passion! And we all know that there are folks all over this world whom we have the pleasure and privilege to assist, who face real life and death challenges.

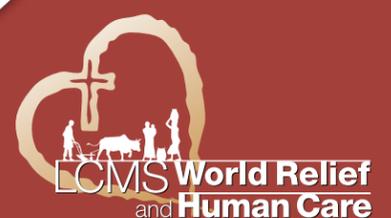
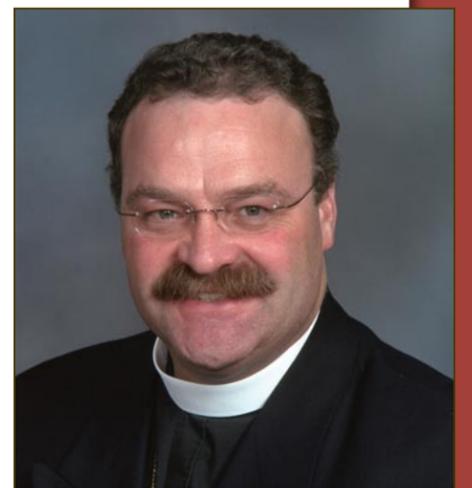
Through the news reports and our publications, you see our staff featured from time to time, doing super stuff. My style of leadership is very, very simple. Hire great, driven folks. Give them the resources and freedom to make things happen in an area they are passionate about. And get out of their way! They have made it happen. I set the theological tone – with the help of a very supportive Board for Human Care – and our staff has targeted the world, spreading the mercy of Jesus in Word and deed, everywhere in their wake. Thousands upon thousands have been touched. In case after case we have been able to join hands and exponentially increase the capacity of faithful Lutherans to care for others in the name of Jesus. It's not merely possible to be Lutheran and merciful, it's impossible not to be merciful as a Lutheran!

There are folks working here whom you rarely, if ever, see. If you call, you'll get Georgia at the front desk, or Sandy. There's Maggie D. always ready to get at this or that. There's Sarah, Matt, Chrissy, and Al keeping track of our folks in the field, moving the information and getting it to you. Barb is busy managing hundreds of project and grant reports, making sure they are all on the up and up. If you call with a question on a donation you'll talk to Anna, or Kathy, or Cindy. Fabulous folks all. I can honestly say, it is a joy to come to work each day with these folks. It's truly wonderful to serve with our whole staff. And they are VERY good at what they do. I learn from them daily.

We are all vitally aware of why you support this work: We actually help people in the name of Jesus, and we do it keeping our costs in line. And I am proud to say that the challenges we face have caused us to improve our accountability, our grant-making, our project work, and our programs. They have never been better at doing what you give so generously for us to do: Demonstrating the compassion of Christ to those who are hurting.

God bless and keep you!

Pastor Matthew Harrison



Mercy forever.