

THIS IS EXCELLENT

/ January 2017

Trapping water
Transforming lives

Excellent Development is a UK and IOM registered charity that supports some of the world's poorest people to transform their own lives.

We support communities in rural drylands to build sand dams, which provide safe water for life for just £10 per person.

Our goal is to enable **millions of the world's poorest people** to transform their own lives with sand dams.

www.excellent.org.uk

WHAT'S INSIDE?



News from northern Kenya

Find out the latest news on our three-year programme in Lekurukki, northern Kenya.



Senelisiwe's story

Senelisiwe from Matobo, Zimbabwe, tells how a sand dam has brought her community together.



Meet Charlie!

Charlie Taylor is our new Sand Dam Foreman. Here, he shares his experiences of his first six months.



Old friends, new adventures

June and Angela have been friends since school days. But 2016 saw one of their greatest adventures yet!

EXCELLENT NEWS

Update on Lekurruki

2016 saw some fantastic progress in our three-year programme in Lekurruki Conservancy in Laikipia County, Kenya – and newfound hope for peace and cooperation in the region for the New Year.

Lekurruki Conservancy is one of 33 community-owned conservancies in the Northern Rangelands. It is a harsh, dry region, with a long history of drought, land degradation and conflict. It is also a region of global ecological importance, supporting 25% of Kenya's wildlife, including vulnerable and endangered species such as the African Elephant, Rothschild Giraffe and Grevy's Zebra.

As drought increases in intensity, pastoralist communities have to travel longer and longer distances to water their livestock. There is fierce competition between neighbouring communities, and with local wildlife, to access the increasingly scarce resource.

We have, to date, constructed seven sand dams in Lekurruki Conservancy, with the



Noolasurai dam, built Nov 2016

“

My hope of the project for this region is to increase the idea of sand dams to other communities... this can be enhanced by making Lekurruki be like a learning hub for them.

”

Lekineji Moile
Maasai community, Lekurruki

aim of building 18 in total by March 2018, which will greatly help to ease the strain of water scarcity in the region. One of these, pictured opposite, is the first Excellent dam of its kind – not only will it provide 2,000 people with water, but it will also act as a road crossing, so pastoralists and their livestock can cross the river more easily during rainy seasons, saving valuable time on their journey in search of land to graze.

Historically, competition over scarce water has led to clashes between the Maasai and Samburu people. But this dam gives hope for a peaceful future. In building the dam, the Maasai were joined by many of the Samburu and Turkana people, and friendships between the communities, rarely seen in this area, were able to flourish in this shared space.

We hope that this road crossing will inspire other communities to come together through the joint provision of sustainable water for life – putting an end to conflict and paving the way for a brighter future for everyone.



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excellent.org.uk/keepintouch

EXCELLENT WORKER

Charlie Taylor

Charlie Taylor started working at Excellent in May last year, in an exciting new role as Sand Dam Foreman.

His job is to provide technical support to Excellent's partners who aspire towards building sand dams. This involves siting, designing and constructing the dams, and most importantly transferring these skills to our partners, so they are equipped to build more dams in the future.

Here, Charlie talks about his daily experiences out in the field.

"My days are very varied but usually we will be getting up early and heading off to a site somewhere. The locations of the dams are usually in the remote rural areas and we often have to spend an hour or two (sometimes three or four) in the vehicle driving down progressively smaller roads, sand tracks and finally across fields to reach our destination. Then there will either be a proposed site or a dam under construction.

"The siting of dams is a conversation between the local community about their needs, land ownership, river flows, water use and some technical aspects of siting such as the need for good bedrock. When a site has been found by walking up and down the river bed, and agreed upon, it will be marked and key measurements will be taken. The design and applications will be finalised back in the office.

"If a dam is under construction, we will be checking that everything is being done correctly, although in Kenya the

Africa Sand Dams Foundation (ASDF) artisans who supervise the work are very experienced and problems are rare. Often we will be pitching in for the day with the community shovelling, mixing sand and cement, carrying big stones or working with the artisans to build the formwork or fix the steels and barbed wire. Seeing a muzungu (white person; foreigner) working alongside the local community often causes much hilarity.

"I feel immensely lucky to be able to work with some of the poorest people on the planet to help them transform their own lives. Through all the struggles and hardships, the heat and dust, the basic living conditions, this fills my heart. Working with the local people, you get to know them and the amount of humour on site through all the hard work is a reminder of how happy they are to be doing something that will benefit them, their children and their grandchildren.

I worked for nearly two weeks with the self-help group Muuo wa Kasyomatu and got to know them pretty well by the end. After they had finished building the dam, they invited me back to share a goat with them, which is the traditional way of celebrating in Kenya. The smiles on their faces and singing and dancing showed how happy they were. Having spent six weeks working on the dam I thought they would be ready to stop, but they have already started another project to improve their dairy cattle and terracing their farms before the rains come. These people are so determined to improve their lives through their own hard physical work that it is a great reminder to me that the money we put in is just a very small part of the whole. Without the commitment of communities themselves, these projects would not be possible."



Charlie Taylor, Sand Dam Foreman, Excellent Development



Senelisiwe Nyoni, Nyoko community

SENELISIWE'S STORY

A changing world for women

Senelisiwe Nyoni, a mother of three from Matobo, Zimbabwe, has reason to be excited for the New Year. She and her community, the Nyoko people, have been building a sand dam – one of the first in the area supported by Excellent – which she dearly hopes will improve her farming, bringing greater opportunity for her children, her community and herself.

Up until now, Senelisiwe and her family have had to collect water from a borehole 2 km away – the sand dam will cut that distance in half for all of the households in the community. Not only is the water from the borehole sometimes unclean, it is also unreliable during the dry season. This is something Senelisiwe is very hopeful will be counteracted by sand dams:

“We believe we will get more water year round from the dam... it will be easier and cleaner.”

The benefits that the new water source would have for Senelisiwe's family and the wider community are vast. In particular,

the community needs the water for drinking, cropping, for livestock and the establishment of gardens. Senelisiwe dreams of working directly with these gardens, helping to support her three children. She believes that the newfound prosperity brought by the sand dam will especially encourage her youngest son:

“I hope that the increased access to water and the income from crops will improve his chance of going to a good school.”

And the dam construction also provides a rare and welcomed opportunity for women to get together. Prior to the work on the Nyoka sand dam, the opportunities for women to come together were few and far between:

“Normally we meet at club level but very rarely, and not with all the women in the community coming together like this. It gives us an opportunity to talk about our daily lives and learn from each other. Even in the presence of men we discuss issues and learn more.”

In Senelisiwe's culture, although women do sometimes assist with construction, it is predominantly a male role. By interchanging roles, women are developing closer relationships with each other and breaking down gender barriers. Senelisiwe, laughing and exchanging high fives with her friends on the dam site, is living proof of how building sand dams together enhances the sense of community between members, whilst also combating water scarcity and food security for decades to come.



I hope that the increased access to water and the income from crops will improve his chance of going to a good school.

Senelisiwe Nyoni
Nyoko community



EXCELLENT SUPPORTER

Angela and June

Does 2017 feel like a year for adventure? This September, why not follow in the footsteps of Angela Seal and June Stapley, two long-standing friends and supporters of Excellent who joined our annual sand dam building expedition in August 2016.

Not only did Angela and June help the Woni Wa Mutyathii self-help group to build a sand dam, but they also managed to raise a huge amount of money to support Excellent from their local community; so far, £1,250 – and still counting!

We asked them both to share their highlights from the expedition experience, and here's what they had to say:

JUNE: "The dam building was a lot of fun, working together with the Kamba people. There was a lot of humour, and their energy was amazing. It was also fantastic to see the success of a dam that was finished four years ago and the effect it had made on the community. There were swathes of green vegetation in every direction where it had once been arid.



GET INVOLVED! IT'S AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE AND EVERY PERSON HELPS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

June Stapley
Excellent Supporter



"It was incredible to see a huge diversity of very healthy crops growing. A vast quantity of spinach was being cut for the market the following day. The quality of the leaves was fabulous, there were no apparent parasites.

"It was always great to get the welcome back at the compound. The ladies who were looking after us were terrific, making us our meals and keeping us comfortable."

ANGELA: "For me, the highlight was working alongside the communities with their tireless and cheerful commitment to the project, followed closely by seeing the amazing crops grown at previously constructed sites, and the health and economic benefits to the people there.

"It was also great to meet Joe from Africa Sand Dam Foundation. He is such an impressive guy, able to communicate effectively with the communities, who clearly respect and trust him implicitly, and with people from Excellent – staff and expeditioners alike. He is knowledgeable; he lived the rural Kenyan life as a child so he knows what it's like, and he has a great sense of humour too. He passionately believes in providing aid which creates independence and I was confident that, with his direction, funds and expertise would be very well used."

Our 2017 expedition will run on September 17 - 23. If you would be interested in finding out more, email expeditions@excellent.org.uk or call Chloe on 020 3752 5788.



June, carrying a bag of cement



Angela, making friends on the site



The Woni Wa Mutyathii self-help group and the 2016 Excellent Expeditioners

Leave a lasting legacy of freedom, health and opportunity

We know that your first priority when making a Will is to provide for those closest to you. As well as remembering family and friends, some people also decide to leave a gift to a special cause, to make a lasting difference to something they really care about.

Sand dams provide a lifelong supply of water for people living in drylands.

Water changes everything. It brings health, freedom and opportunity. Having a water source nearby means that people, especially women and children, can save up to 11½ hours a day. Their lives are completely transformed, for generations to come.

The land surrounding the dam, once dry and inhospitable, over time becomes fertile and green. Parents can use the water, and time saved, to make a living from farming, so they can afford to pay school fees.

Children, no longer drinking contaminated water from unsafe sources, are more healthy, and are freed from fetching water to attend a full school day – even going on to study at University. A whole world of opportunity opens up, made possible only by the generosity of supporters like you.

“We are investing for our children, and it is them whose lives will be better than ours. Our children, they’ll have all this in place as they grow up. So, the future looks bright for them.”

Josephine Kanini, Kwa Munyaka self-help group

It takes a great many small components to build a sand dam. Whatever you can afford, we will turn it into something important and tangible, that will transform lives for years to come.

If you would like to find out more about leaving a gift to Excellent in your Will, please contact Rachel Beer on 020 3752 5785 or email rachel@excellent.org.uk. Alternatively, fill out the form overleaf and return to us in the Freepost envelope provided.



Please send me more information about leaving a gift in my Will

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Our reference: 366

PLEASE DONATE

Your donations play an essential role in supporting people living in drylands to build sand dams, and make a living from farming:

- £15 could provide a dryland farmer with drought-tolerant seeds, to grow a reliable source of fresh food for their children
- £30 could supply a community with a rake, gardening fork, shovel and watering can, to plant a tree nursery for fruit, fuel and fodder
- £55 could provide a community with a roll of barbed wire, to reinforce their sand dam and keep it anchored to the bedrock
- £105 could provide a community with a wheelbarrow and ten bags of cement, to help them construct their sand dam
- £320 could provide a community with manure, organic pesticides and seeds to plant, fertilise and protect a shared growing plot
- £1200 could provide a community with the timber formwork to build their sand dam, providing a lifelong supply of water

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Through using sand dams, terracing and climate-smart farming, 91% of people reported improved nutrition