

# THIS IS EXCELLENT

/ Autumn 2015

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Trapping water  
Freeing communities

**Excellent Development is a UK 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 £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](http://www.excellent.org.uk)**

# WHAT'S INSIDE?



## News from northern Kenya

Read about this exciting development as new parts of Kenya embrace the benefits of sand dams.



## Regina's story

Regina is a proud parent with renewed hope for her children's future.



## Sam Wren's expedition

Visiting Kenya with us was a life-changing experience for Sam. Here he tells us about his amazing trip.



## Excellent worker

Our Programmes Officer Emma Seal talks about her job and the realities of working in Marwar, the 'land of death'.

# EXCELLENT NEWS

## First Excellent sand dam in northern Kenya.

In February 2015, the community of Lekurruki Conservancy completed their first sand dam. But they're not stopping there. Working with our partner Lekurruki Conservation Trust (LCT) we are supporting them to build 10 more sand dams next year, revolutionising access to safe water for people and wildlife in this drought-prone region.

In Lekurruki, longer droughts are creating fatal conflict between people, livestock and elephants as they search for water. Overcoming this means improving water resources for people, livestock and wildlife alike. And, in rural drylands like Lekurruki, the best way to do that is with sand dams.

Simon Njalis, LCT Senior Warden, told us: "By trapping the rainwater with many sand dams and separating where the wildlife get water and humans get water ... this is among the things that can reduce the sort of conflict that is being experienced now."



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**Simon Njalis**  
**Senior Warden**  
**Lekurruki Conservation Trust**

Sand dams are an ancient way of providing sustainable water supplies in rural drylands. They store up to 40 million litres of safe water, reducing water conflict and helping people and wildlife to survive chronic periods of drought.

Following the March rains, the sand dam is already replenishing groundwater, helping trees and plants to grow. After several more rains, it will bring year-round safe water to the people and elephants of Lekurruki for generations to come.

**Read more Excellent news online at:**  
[www.excellent.org.uk/articles](http://www.excellent.org.uk/articles)



**The first Lekurruki sand dam.**



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# EXCELLENT WORKER

## Emma's story.

Emma started working in the Excellent Development office earlier in the year, managing relationships with our partners Africa Sand Dam Foundation (ASDF) in Kenya and Jal Bhagirathi Foundation (JBF) in Rajasthan. She has just returned from a visit to the Marwar region in Rajasthan and talks here about her experiences.

### How is the India project is going?

"The programme in India is moving into an exciting next stage. Now that it's clear that the pilot programme was so successful, the plans for more projects in Marwar are able to move ahead. Our discussions with JBF have been very positive and they are keen to move into much larger scale work with sand dams."

### Tell us about some of the people you've met in India.

"I had the chance to meet several of the community members benefiting from the pilot projects while visiting in September. What struck me most was the extent of their knowledge of their land. When we visited pilot sites and went scouting for new dam sites, the local farmers accompanied us. When asked about the flow of the river at a particular point they were able to answer immediately. Their knowledge is intricate and it is vital to ensuring the projects succeed. The levels of poverty and desperation for water are also starkly clear."



THEIR [THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WE WORK WITH IN MARWAR] KNOWLEDGE IS INTRICATE AND IT IS VITAL TO ENSURING THE PROJECTS SUCCEED. THE LEVELS OF POVERTY AND DESPERATION FOR WATER ARE ALSO STARKLY CLEAR.



**Emma Seal**  
**Programmes Officer**  
**Excellent Development**

### How does it feel to be working on such a project?

"I feel lucky to be connected to such a water solution. I can talk to the communities about the positive changes they are seeing, the excitement they have for their futures. But it is also scary knowing that the person I speak to today may not be alive next time I visit if the rains fail or if the project is not completed in time."

Despite the incredibly high stakes, Emma is confident of the great potential for sand dams in Marwar and more widely in India. They have already yielded fantastic results and she is excited to be playing a leading role in the project as it develops. Watch this space!





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**Children in communities with sand dams save an average of five hours a day for their education.**

# REGINA'S STORY

## Empowering the next generation.

Children, mainly girls, in communities with sand dams save on average five hours a day. That's five hours they can spend at school, which is a big investment for their future. A future, which parents like Regina hope, will be brighter than that of previous generations.

The children of the Malaika self-help group used to get up very early every morning. They would walk and wait at a small scoop hole in the dry riverbed to fill up their jerry cans. The queues were long and it would take about 30 minutes for enough water to accumulate at the bottom of the hole to fill up one five-litre jerry can. Not surprisingly they often arrived at school late and exhausted.

Children in rural Kenya are expected to bring water to school every day for cooking, cleaning and drinking. If they don't, they are often sent away. They then either brave the dry and dusty heat to try and find water or they simply go home, missing out on a day's schooling. It's not an act of cruelty; it's just the harsh reality of dealing with severe water shortages. Education is one of the big winners when it comes to water harvesting solutions.

And the benefits don't stop there. The community is also using water from the sand dam to grow a variety of crops. Regina Makao, parent and member of the Malaika self-help group, told us: "Last week my own child was sent home from school to collect fees.



Children of Malaika self-help group

"Because I have tomatoes that I have planted, I was able to have some income. The child went back to school. That would not happen before."

In Kenya where only 50% of children make it to secondary school level\*, sand dams have a huge potential to raise the prospects of the youngest generation. Sand dams not only free up children's time to go to school, but also provide their parents with the opportunity to earn money to invest in their children's future.

**Read more Excellent stories online at:**  
[www.excellent.org.uk/articles](http://www.excellent.org.uk/articles)

\*Source: UNESCO Kenya Profile

# EXCELLENT SUPPORTER

## Sam Wren goes on an expedition.

When Sam Wren heard about his employer's annual competition to win a place on an Excellent expedition, he didn't think it was exactly his cup of tea. But after his colleagues Claudia and Peter shared their experience, he was impressed and thought he'd give it a try. He couldn't have been more surprised when, the following year, his name was drawn out of the hat!

Sam told us: "The visit has changed me tremendously. I have seen parts of Kenya that normal tourists will not visit. It was quite breathtaking. Not just in the Safari park – there were beautiful mountains and serene moments when we were travelling to the villages amongst red landscape. It took me out of my comfort zone and this was a very good thing."

The expedition was hard work at times (not least because of the lack of internet, although the expeditioners were still able to use Whatsapp to contact family and friends). Facilities were basic, but Sam found he adjusted to that pretty quickly. Less easy to bear was the slight embarrassment of wearing safety goggles and kit alongside the self-help group members, who were easily able to handle the sharp rock with their bare hands!

As well as making new friends, Sam discovered a new found love for Kenya



Sam Wren working on the sand dam

– and for sand dams. He told us: "I will definitely be going back to Kenya in the near future. I want to take my family to see the beautiful country and people and I'm interested in visiting other countries that sand dams are working in too."

Now Sam is recommending his colleagues to enter the competition next year, so that they too can see this life-changing project first hand.

If this is something you or your company would be interested in doing, please email us at [expeditions@excellent.org.uk](mailto:expeditions@excellent.org.uk).

**What better way to see the miracle of sand dams than to help build one yourself?**

**Join us for a sand dam expedition in rural Kenya for a week in August 2016.**

**Our expeditions are about energy, team work and fun.**

**Come and see first-hand how sand dams are transforming lives.**

**[expeditions@excellent.org.uk](mailto:expeditions@excellent.org.uk)**

A group of people are working on a construction project in a dry, hilly landscape. In the foreground, a person in a grey shirt and dark shorts is digging a trench with a shovel. Behind them, another person in a colorful floral shirt is also working. Further back, a line of people is visible, some carrying bags, suggesting they are contributing to the project. The ground is reddish-brown soil, and the background shows sparse vegetation and a clear sky with some clouds.

**The people we support  
contribute about 50% of  
the materials and labour for  
every project you donate to.**

# PLEASE DONATE.

Regular donations create opportunity and hope for families where there is otherwise none. **£10 a month could support one person every month to have safe water for life.**

Regular donation	£		
Frequency (please circle)	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually
Starting from date			

Name(s) of account holder(s):

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Our reference: 360

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**We'd love to hear from you!**  
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