

THIS IS EXCELLENT

Spring 2014

A dam is just
the beginning



Excellent Development is a UK registered charity that supports people in rural drylands to overcome hunger and poverty with dignity.

We work with local partners to support communities to build sand dams.

Sand dams provide clean water for life and the opportunity to grow enough food to eat, store and sell.

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

www.excellent.org.uk

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With our support, the United Nations Development Programme is constructing four sand dams in Swaziland this year.



Excellent Worker

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Mary's story

"Now when I scoop sand in the sand dams there is water. In the past I would not get even a single drop."



A Pilgrimage for Poppy

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EXCELLENT NEWS

Sand dams in Swaziland

With our support, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will construct four sand dams in Swaziland this year. UNDP and the government of Swaziland have adopted sand dams as one of the ways the country is adapting to the impacts of climate change.

This exciting news follows a study in 2013, led by Excellent Development, demonstrating the suitability of sand dams to the region.

In March 2014, our technical team visited Swaziland to plan how sand dams will be applied. Senior technical staff from Africa Sand Dam Foundation (ASDF), the Swaziland Department of Water Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Public Works and transport, and UNDP accompanied our team to develop their knowledge of sand dam design.

The project involves building at least four sand dams in the Middleveld and Lowveld regions of Swaziland - the hottest and driest parts of the country.

Local communities will own the sand dams, and they have been closely involved with their siting and design. They will also provide labour - contributing to the construction of the sand dams, which is soon to begin.

Climate change is predicted to bring weather extremes and increased aridity to Swaziland in the near future. The impacts of this will affect the livelihoods of the poorest and least resilient communities

“SAND DAMS CAN PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE SECURE WATER SUPPLY THROUGH RAIN WATER HARVESTING IN SWAZILAND RIGHT NOW, AS WELL AS MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF A CLIMATE CHANGED FUTURE.

Cate Ryan
Pilot Programmes Manager
Excellent Development

the most. The majority of these live in the driest, rural areas.

There is enormous potential for sand dams to mitigate these effects in the country's driest regions, where fresh water shortages are common due to low rainfall and high temperatures.

This project is a significant step towards addressing critical future water shortages and providing security to vulnerable communities' livelihoods.



Sign up for monthly news at:
excellent.org.uk/keepintouch

EXCELLENT WORKER

Christine Whinney

Christine Whinney is our Programme Manager. Her job bridges our UK office with our partners in Kenya, Africa Sand Dam Foundation (ASDF). I spoke to Christine to find out more.

How would you describe your role?

"I work closely with ASDF to monitor the work funded by Excellent's generous donors. A key part of my job is ensuring donor's money is spent as we agreed, finding out from ASDF what their future funding needs are, and getting information so donors can see the impact their money has had."

From the donations we receive, can you tell us what impact it makes?

"A definite perk of my job is visiting Kenya and seeing for myself the amazing impact our projects have on people's lives. Communities, women especially, are released from the huge burden of water collection."



Christine, third from top left, with ASDF & Excellent Development staff

"Sand dams are the cheapest way to bring a lifetime of clean water close to people's homes in drylands. They are creating opportunity and hope for families to lift themselves out of poverty."

"Water collection becomes a relatively quick task; people are spending much more time on their farms, growing food for their families, and to sell. Children, released from this burden, are attending school".

One of our philosophies is 'nothing comes for free'. What contribution do the self-help groups make?

"'Nothing comes for free' is the fundamental approach of our work. For example, when building sand dams, a community must supply all of the locally available materials, such as sand and stones, and bring these to the dam site. This takes a massive effort: large stones are wrenched from the ground by hand or broken into smaller stones with sledgehammers; sand is shovelled and brought to the site in wheelbarrows."

"All of the manual labour for actually building the dam is also supplied by communities. This can require up to three weeks of intense physical work, and time away from their own farms. So, every donation is a hand-up, not a hand-out."

"We only ever work with communities who have asked for support and have demonstrated their commitment to a project. Communities own their development plans from start to finish - improving the long term sustainability. It's incredible to see how families are transforming their lives with the opportunity our donors create."

OUR IMPACTS: PEOPLE



Every community supported invests 40% of the cost of their project through labour and the provision of locally available materials.

OUR IMPACTS: WATER

Sand dams store up to 30 million litres of water - protected from evaporation, contamination and disease

MARY'S STORY

Breaking with tradition

Meet Mary Ndulu. Mary is a member of the Kyeni kya Mukononi self-help group in south east Kenya. Ever since Mary was born, finding enough water to live has been a daily struggle. Mary told us:

“My mother used to fetch water from the Athi River [Kenya's second longest river, and one of the few where water flows all year-round]. She would trek to the river carrying a gourd [the hard shell of a plant] on her back and another on her chest.

Until recently, life was no different for Mary. Now a mother herself, Mary said:

“I raised all my children with water from the Athi River. I could only manage to carry one jerry can in a day and the water was not enough for washing clothes for the kids.”

From Mary's home it is about a 13km walk to the Athi River.

Mary remembers: “We had to go to the river very early in the morning so that we were back home before noon.” It was an exhausting and not terribly rewarding trip, as 20 litres of water a day isn't much.

The average person in England and Wales uses 150 litres of water a day - easy when it comes straight out of the tap.

Thanks to our incredible donors, there is now relief: since starting work with our partners, Africa Sand Dam Foundation, Mary and her community have built four sand dams and two water tanks.



Mary Ndulu

With a huge smile on her face, Mary told us: “Now for the first time the sand dam near my homestead has been filled with sand. We have drinking water from the sand dams.

“When I scoop sand in the sand dams there is water. In the past I would not get even a single drop.”

Mary uses the water for cooking, washing, bathing, and her livestock. “My life has greatly changed”, she says. “Since I no longer go to the Athi River, I can spend the time on other home chores and terracing my farm, because I have water within my vicinity. My children have also benefitted from sand dam water. They no longer bathe with water from swamps, they just make scoop holes and collect clean water.”

EXCELLENT SUPPORTERS

Poppy's pilgrimage

Poppy Weston first heard of Excellent Development through our Telegraph Christmas Appeal in 2009. Since then, her enthusiasm and commitment to supporting rural communities through our work has known no bounds!

In September 2011, Poppy took part in our sand dam expedition, carrying boulders and shovelling cement in the hot Kenyan sun to help a self-help group build a life transforming sand dam. Poppy told us this was a "great experience" that allowed her to see the impacts of sand dams and how they will transform the lives of millions of the world's poor. Since then Poppy has become a tireless ambassador for sand dams through hosting talks about our work for Rotary clubs and various community groups in her local area.

To top it all, last summer Poppy completed a 70 mile pilgrimage, from York Minster to Bridlington Priory in East Yorkshire, raising funds for Excellent along the way. Poppy told us what inspired her to make the journey:

"We were 'celebrating the journey' – a 900 year journey in this case, since the foundation of Bridlington Priory in 1113. The Priory later became a centre for pilgrimage, after the Priory was made a saint (in 1400). It seemed to me that there were some interesting parallels here – not only the journeys that people in Kenya - and elsewhere - have to make daily to fetch water, but also the whole journey that sand dams represent, from scarcity to security, and the long-term community commitment to this journey".



Poppy Weston and companion Guinness

Poppy wanted to ensure that this message came across and handed out our leaflets at the pilgrimage stopping points, raising £100 for our community water and food projects!

After completing the pilgrimage, Poppy told me:

"I found that undertaking a challenge like this is a bit like the experience of sharing in the building of a sand dam: you step outside the daily routine and focus on the immediate, the physical and the communal, and there's a great satisfaction in achieving the goal. But not quite so hot!"

If, like Poppy, you would like to help create opportunity and hope for families in rural drylands by doing a walk or a sponsored event, please visit our website or get in touch. We'd love to hear from you!

Fundraising to support Excellent Development's work is a rewarding and fun way to make a difference to the lives of rural communities in drylands.

There are two events taking place this year:

London to Brighton Cycle Ride.
Sunday 7th September.

Thames Path Challenge (walk/run).
13th/14th September

To find out more visit
www.excellent.org.uk/getinvolved
or contact
wonu@excellent.org.uk

A HAND UP NOT A HAND OUT

You can also give online:
justgiving.com/excellentdev/donate

SET UP A DIRECT DEBIT

Your regular gifts create opportunity and hope for families where there is otherwise none. **£10 a month could support one person every month to have clean water for life.**

Regular donation	£
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Frequency (please circle)	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually
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Starting from date	
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Excellent Development, Studio 59, The Market Building,
195 High Street, Brentford, Middlesex, TW8 8LB.

Your generous donations are vital to dryland families. But, you can make a big impact in other ways too!

Sharing our news and stories on social media makes a huge difference to raising awareness about our work.

Facebook.com/excellentdevelopment

Twitter.com/thisisexcellent

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