



# WATER OF LIFE

GUATEMALA



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compassion's work in Guatemala began in 1976. Currently, more than 52,000 children participate in programme at 193 child development centres. Compassion partners with churches around the country to help them provide the children of Guatemala with the opportunity to rise above their circumstances and become all God has created them to be.

Access to safe, clean water is a fundamental human need. Yet, more than 1 billion people worldwide have no access to a safe water source and every day over 4,000 children are dying of easily preventable water-related diseases such as cholera and typhoid.<sup>i</sup>

Of the ten leading causes of death in Guatemala, diarrhoeal illness is responsible for almost 4 percent and causes 7 percent of infant mortality.<sup>i</sup> Provision of drinking water services is not regulated by the central government and each municipality has its own system. Of the 331 municipalities in Guatemala, only 24 have drinking water treatment systems, and of these only 15 are in operation.

Water sources are contaminated with faecal waste and chemicals, and thousands of children are dying from diarrhoea. The need is particularly acute in rural areas where only 73 percent have access to piped water, compared to 98 percent in urban areas.<sup>ii</sup> In a country with the fourth highest malnutrition rate of children under five in the world, parasites transferred by waterborne contamination are consuming the nutrients children need.<sup>iii</sup>

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) is a priority for Compassion Guatemala. So in order to address these difficulties, two RESPOND Initiatives were launched to provide 3,250 children and their families with access to purified water through the distribution of Water of Life filters.



The filters effectively remove 99.9 percent of bacterial contaminants in water and eliminate preventable diseases such as cholera, typhoid, E.coli, amoebic dysentery, botulism, streptococcus and salmonella. 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 bacteria and allow only safe water to pass through for drinking.

The filters have been tested by doctors, the United Nations and other NGOs and last a lifetime with simple maintenance and rinsing. Each filter is capable of purifying 1 million gallons of water and a child is expected to need only 14,600 gallons in their lifetime.

Sustainable Development Goal six aims to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Specifically, it calls for "access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all" and an "end to open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations by 2030." **Compassion Water of Life initiatives support the Sustainable Development Goals pictured.**



## ACTIVITY REPORT

INITIATIVE	Water of Life Guatemala
RESPOND NUMBERS	GU-014771 and GU-014799
BENEFICIARIES	3,250 children and 4,450 caregivers
FUNDING	A total of £57,997 and £954 local contribution
START DATE	September 2014

Compassion Guatemala staff first formed an implementation committee to oversee each initiative. Initial surveys on hygiene habits were then conducted at each of the beneficiary projects to understand the hygiene habits practised, the levels of consumption of purified water and the knowledge of water purification techniques. Qualified instructors were hired to run the training.

All of the beneficiary caregivers received hygiene and sanitation training, covering topics such as water contamination, clean home environments and the importance of hand washing. The survey results guided the instructors as to which issues needed the most attention in each community in order to deliver bespoke training. Attendance of this training was a requirement for all beneficiaries to receive a filter.

The topics covered included how water becomes contaminated, how it affects people's health, how to maintain a clean home environment and the importance of hand washing. Attendance to the training was a prerequisite for receiving a Water of Life filters and hence maximum participation levels were achieved. All attendees received printed, illustrated materials and took part in a knowledge-based evaluation on completion of the training.



The local Water of Life distributor was responsible for training project representatives on the correct usage, the assembly and cleaning of the filters. These volunteers were then responsible to train each family, and will assist in ongoing maintenance. Once the training phase was completed, the distribution began. Each family received a Compassion Water of Life unit which contained:

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

Staff at each project were responsible for monitoring the information gathered from medical check-ups throughout 2015. This was done through a series of interviews and home visits to the beneficiaries. The interview included seven questions relating to the proper usage of the filter and the knowledge and practice of hygiene habits. Project staff also evaluated how each family used the filter and if it was kept in an adequate place.

## BUDGET

Each initiative was fully funded and the total budget was spent to enable all planned activities. In total 1,300 filters and 2,600 buckets were purchased and distributed, with each beneficiary receiving training.

## IMPACT

3,250 children and 4,450 caregivers benefited directly from this initiative. The life-long benefits of Compassion Water of Life mean that this simple initiative will have significant health, education and economic benefits for these Guatemalan children and their families.

When children have sustained protection from preventable diseases their health is improved, allowing them to go to school regularly and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Safe water will mean that families need fewer resources to treat illnesses and for many this financial saving is significant for their household budgets. Key outcomes include:

OUTCOMES	GU-014771	GU-014799
Access to safe drinking water	100%	100%
Knowledge of the use and maintenance of the filters	100%	100%
Families using filters	89%	99%
Filters kept in an appropriate place	83%	91%
Families using safe water to cook with, and to maintain good hygiene	77%	97%
Families where one member has contracted a gastrointestinal illness	29%	6%
Total beneficiaries now consuming safe drinking water (for an average family of six members)	3,471	3,861

360 of the filters were distributed to mothers and their babies who are registered in Compassion's Child Survival Programme.

## LESSONS LEARNT

Overall, the initiative was a great success, but some challenges were experienced which will be used to inform future projects. These include:

- ④ Use of filters – some families didn't place the filter in a proper place and could not use it adequately. Others broke the buckets in which the safe water was to be caught. Project staff replaced the buckets and provided extra guidance to families in positioning the filter correctly during the home visits.
- ④ Geography – many of the projects are located far away from each other, in remote areas which can be hard to navigate to, even with GPS coordinates. Project staff ensured that they met the filter distributor at a known landmark and guided them to their project.
- ④ Language barrier – Some participants spoke only Mayan, which is common in the rural areas. We recruited translators who first met with the trainers to go through the learning content and key topics prior to the delivery of the training. Although the communication barrier was addressed, we found that the translators who had good knowledge and understanding of the topic were more effective in helping to facilitate the sessions.
- ④ Lack of water – Some of the families lived in areas that did not have access to ground water sources. This was a major challenge because to use the filters, an adequate supply of water is required. This will be prioritised in future initiatives.

## INTERVIEWS

### *Interview with project director of GU-476, Joel Cortez.*

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

Families are using the water filters and now have access to safe drinking water. Families have noticed that they aren't getting sick as often as before.

#### **Describe how things will be different now that this initiative has been completed.**

Dolores, the town where we live, has problems because of water. There isn't purified water in the community and children get sick very often. Now our families have purified water at their houses and we have seen that they get sick less.

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

The impact of this initiative is big, because it is not only for the registered children but for their families too. Having the filters means, not only having access to purified water, but also that the health of all members of the family is improved. As project director, I am very grateful to Compassion and the donors who made it possible because it is of great benefit for our community.

### *Interview with María and Oscar Díaz, the parents of registered child Oscar Ovidio.*

#### **What was your life like before this initiative?**

When we had money we purchased boiled water or purified it. Sometimes because of the expense and the time it took to fetch and boil, we drank water from the river.

#### **How is your life different now that this initiative is complete?**

Now we filter the water at home and all the family drink water from it. Also, because we move temporarily to work in the field for a month, we could take the filter with us and continue to drink safe water during this time. We didn't have to buy or drink contaminated water. It is a great support for the family because we have safe water and won't get sick so often.

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

The filter is a great support for the family because we all have access to purified water and this helps us to be healthy. I thank God for His blessing and for the donors who made it possible.

### *Interview with Ana Lilian Canil, mother of registered child Tomás Fernando Marroquín.*

#### **What was your life like before this initiative?**

It was difficult for the family to drink purified water before receiving the filter, because we tried to boil water when we had wood for the fire. But there were days when we didn't have enough wood, so we didn't boil the water and children drank from the tap. They got sick with diarrhoea often.

#### **How is your life different now that this initiative is complete?**

Now we filter the water at home and all the family drinks purified water. We also use the water to make beverages like coffee, to prepare food and for washing our hands before eating.

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

We don't have to worry about having money for wood so we can boil the water, because now we have a filter at home. The family thanks donors who made this possible. Because of them, many others have received the great blessing of a filter for their house that blesses many people, daily.

*Interview with project director of GU-897, Lorena Maricela Bran Orantes.*

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

The water filters have supported and improved the economy of the beneficiary families. Before, many people deprived themselves of water or made a big effort to buy purified water. Some of them consumed unsafe water and got sick. We are very glad because of this initiative, as it has been a blessing.

**Describe how things will be different now that the initiative has been completed.**

Some families need purified water because they sell ice, food or juices, and without safe water they cannot sell the products hygienically. Now they can sell more, and do not have limits on consuming water because of the cost. Four litres would cost GTQ 15 [approximately £1.35], and they consumed eight litres daily. But now they save this money for their family's income.

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

It is a privilege that Compassion can contribute to support families in their financial situations and health concerns. Donors are helping to support them in their holistic development.

*Interview with Patricia Hernández, mother of Compassion-assisted child.*

**What was your life like before this initiative was implemented?**

I used to consume water from the wells as we did not have access to purified water and my children used to get sick in their stomachs. For my shopping stand, I used to buy water in bags. We did not have a place or people who could teach us about the importance of purified water.

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

I am very glad because I have been using the water filter for nine months. I don't need to buy water in bags, which is a saving, and my children have not got sick. The work that Compassion does has a great impact. I am very grateful to all people involved in this initiative. It has not only impacted me - there are 10 members of my family and all of us have benefited. God bless you.

*Interview with Efraín Toc Xol, father of a Compassion-assisted child at GU-459.*

**What was your life like before this initiative?**

My children used to get sick in their stomachs and they like to drink cold water. But we used to boil the water, so they had to wait to drink the water and we spent money buying firewood.

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

I have learned about the importance of purified water. This initiative has helped my family and I to save money and time, and helped us to prevent gastrointestinal illnesses. I think this initiative has been a great support for the finances and health of the families. I thank, with all my heart, the people who donated the filters.

*Interview with Maria Berta García, mother of a Compassion-assisted child at GU-476.*

**How is your life different now that this initiative is complete?**

Before, we did not consume purified water, and our children got sick often. This filter is a great support for the family because we are consuming purified water. Our children do not get sick from gastrointestinal illnesses anymore and it was a great support to consume purified water. We had to leave our home for a month because of the harvest and we could take the filter with us, because is portable.

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

It is a great job what Compassion and all the staff do, now we can live and consume food and water in a healthy way.



Hygiene training about the importance of using safe water



Child Survival mothers who attended the training participated in various ways as well as receiving printed material to take home









## FINAL REMARKS

Thank you for supporting Compassion's Water of Life initiatives in Guatemala. Your generous donation has directly contributed to the protection of children and their families from preventable waterborne diseases through the improved practice of safe hygiene practices and the effective elimination of bacterial contaminants in water.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us on 01932 836490 or at [info@compassionuk.org](mailto:info@compassionuk.org). Thank you.

<sup>i</sup> WHO and UN partners, *Country statistics and global health estimates*. Available from: [www.who.int/gho/countries/gtm.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/gho/countries/gtm.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>ii</sup> JMP, 2014, Guatemala: Estimates on the use of Water Sources and Sanitation Facilities [1980–2012]. Available from: [www.wssinfo.org/documents/?tx\\_displaycontroller%5Btype%5D=country\\_files](http://www.wssinfo.org/documents/?tx_displaycontroller%5Btype%5D=country_files)

<sup>iii</sup> World Food Programme, *Guatemala: Overview*. Available from: [wfp.org/countries/Guatemala/overview](http://wfp.org/countries/Guatemala/overview)

<sup>iv</sup> UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, *Goal 6*. Available from: [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6)