

THE WORLD WITHOUT WATER

Words by Steve Langlois

Clean water isn't just a matter of life and death. It's not just about thirst, hunger and sanitation. It's about opportunity. What does that really mean? In February, I travelled to Tanzania with a small team from The Eleanor Foundation to find out.



Being so passionate about my profession, I'm a big supporter of the water points work that The Eleanor Foundation is doing in Tanzania. I really wanted to see the impact they are having first-hand and use my knowledge and experience to help them.

This was a personal journey, but I also learned a huge amount professionally too. It helped me fully appreciate just how vital Guernsey Water is for the prosperity of our island. This might seem obvious, but to truly understand you would need to strip away all the water and sewerage infrastructure that we have built up over the last century. Without this we would all appreciate just how important clean water and sanitation is for health, education, the environment and our economy.

I spent a week with the team in Biharamulo district which is in the north-west of the country. The team was also accompanied by partners in local government who are responsible for community development.

During this time we met with village leaders that had taken responsibility for the Foundation's newly constructed wells in 2017.

Working in partnership with local government is considered essential for the success of Eleanor Foundation projects. Given my own role in public service this aligns well with my values and is one of the reasons behind my support. Governments worldwide are looking to work more closely with the charitable sector and Guernsey is no different to Tanzania in this respect.

Another reason for my support is the way The Eleanor Foundation team defines success; not by the number of new wells they install but by how many will be working in ten years or more. Ensuring the ongoing sustainability of a new water supply is incredibly important for gaining trust, especially in a country where water point functionality is as low as 56%.

The team and I also visited a number of schools to help assess the impact of The



I've been the General Manager of Guernsey Water since I returned to Guernsey in 2014. My trip to Tanzania was self-funded, but Guernsey Water supported me by donating some outmoded water testing equipment. This helps local communities monitor the quality of the water collected from wells handed over to them by The Eleanor Foundation. Since 2014 The Eleanor Foundation has enabled the construction of 44 shallow wells, helping local communities with around 40,000 people. With plans for a further 20 wells this year, their next milestone is to bring clean water to a population the size of Guernsey.

Eleanor Foundation's solar disinfection and hand washing programs. It is here that he became more fully aware of the vital link that connects clean water and sanitation with education, opportunity and the economy. Over half the population of Biharamulo is under the age of 14, which contrasts starkly with our own ageing population. Future prosperity there is dependent upon the education of these children and their ability to find employment.

One of the biggest barriers to education in Biharamulo is lack of access to clean water. The task of collecting and carrying water

back to the family can take hours and is often considered a more important role for children than attending school. When collected the water is often of very poor quality, we tested some and the bacteria found could cause serious illness.

Water borne illnesses are a common cause of absence from school and treating them costs families around 15% of their subsistence budget. Providing them with better access to clean water and not only do you improve their health, but you also enable them to educate their children, increase their productivity and consequently their

wealth. So when it comes to clean water and sanitation health really is wealth!

My journey was an overwhelmingly positive experience, although it was an emotional rollercoaster with many highs and lows.

The scale of need there is so vast, the only thing we found that could match it was the warmth and determination of the people we met, they were truly inspiring.