

IN PARTNERSHIP

September 2021



The Ripple Effect of the Baravet Water Project



Lillian was born in the village of Baravet, Vanuatu

Baravet and Whitewater are small coastal villages on Pentecost Island. Like many rural communities in Vanuatu, the people living there had no reliable access to safe water.

The whole community had to share just a few water taps. When they were broken and dirty, the water was unsafe. Because they were shared, nobody agreed on who should be responsible for maintaining them.

Thankfully, the COCOA Vanuatu Partnership Community Project provided resources to them! This is one of the projects supported by Safe Water September. Because of this support, these communities could fix their water tanks and pipes, and install a tap for each household!

There were immediate effects — everyone now has clean water! But it didn't stop there. Having easy access to clean, safe water then rippled out and improved life for Baravet in other ways.

Matan is a teacher and tells us that she used to walk to the next village to bring back water for the school.

“Now the pre-school has a standpipe. We have clean water and do not need to walk long distances,” Matan says. “The children can clean their hands after (using the) toilet and not worry about using up the water.”

The children are now much healthier. Sickneses like diarrhoea have been greatly reduced. Safe water for all the children leads to increased health outcomes for them!

The sharing of access to water caused conflict in the community. With their own taps, there is now no conflict over water. Another community member said this was the biggest change in their life from the project.

“Before, people had many disputes about the communal taps. Many people were frightened of using the

taps and would try to find other taps to use and even get water from the stream, which is dangerous.”

As part of the project, a water committee was established. They agreed to be responsible for maintaining the pipes and collecting the monthly fee from the households. This means everyone can have access to safe water, without arguing over who is responsible for the required maintenance.

“Now people have their own taps and they are responsible for their own taps. I am pleased that there is a big reduction in complaints and disputes in the community.”

Lillian, who was born in the village and has lived there her whole life, said the water project brought people closer.

She told us about how the people in the communities came together through the project. **cont pg 2 >>**

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While the men worked to install the pipes, the women gathered and cooked meals together for the community to share. Now Lillian has access to water at her own home!

“Before the project I would watch people go to the communal pipe and wait for them to finish so that I could get my water,” Lillian said. “Now I have my own water. I can get water whenever I want. This makes me very happy – it’s very hard to describe my feelings.”

Working together to improve their community brought the people of Baravet closer!

It’s easy to think of effects in isolation — a water project provides fresh water, end of story. The reality, however, is a ripple effect. Clean water leads to better health. Easy access to water helps resolve disputes. An organised process helps the community take responsibility for their own infrastructure.

The people in Baravet and Whitewater had their need for safe water met — but many people in Vanuatu are still in need! You can make a difference to people like Lillian and Matan in Vanuatu – whether you take the challenge and raise funds, or give generously to those who are. Go to SafeWaterSeptember.org.au and get involved today!



The Vanuatu Partnership Community project, through Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA), is one of the projects supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Isaac using a ground tap in Baravet, Vanuatu

News & Events



Father’s Day! – September 5

Happy Father’s Day to all the Awesome Dads and Father figures in our lives. Thank you for all that you are and all that you do.



It’s time again for Safe Water September.

Globally, 1 in 10 people don’t have clean water close to home. You can help change this.

Switch to just water this September. You can still eat food – but no coffee, tea, soft drink or milkshakes!

For every \$25 you raise, one person gains access to safe water. This improves health, hygiene and helps to stop the spread of disease. These long-term improvements help reduce child and maternal deaths, help kids to stay in school, and can transform whole communities!

This year, Safe Water September is supporting Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) projects in Bangladesh, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe. We will also be giving 10% of funds raised to emergency relief for refugees in Afghanistan. You can read more about this initiative and how it relates to Safe Water, on the back page.

If you would like to find out more about taking the challenge, head to SafeWaterSeptember.org.au to sign up, read the blog and access resources — including an activity pack for kids!



SPOTLIGHT

Installing latrines in the Bandarban Hills

The Safe Water Situation in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, many people do not have a toilet. Barely half of the population has proper access to sanitation. Most of these people live in rural communities like the Bandarban Hills region.¹ This means they must go to the toilet out in the open.

That's why this year Safe Water September is working with the Community Advancement Forum (CAF) and the Bandarban Hills Churches of Christ (BHCOG). These two local partners work together to help rural communities in Bangladesh install latrines, learn good hygiene practices and have safe access to water.

As we've mentioned before, lack of proper toilets leads to exposed excrement. Human excrement contains dangerous pathogens like e.coli and norovirus. People can't travel far to use the toilet, so this means they are living, working and eating close to human excrement. This means they are much more likely to get sick.

This waste and these pathogens can also contaminate drinking water, leading to diseases like diarrhoea and cholera. Children are especially at risk of health issues; open defecation has been linked to increases in malnutrition and

stunted growth². Without adequate medical care, which can be hard to get in marginalised communities, these diseases can be fatal.

These critical issues, however, can be helped by latrines. Our partners work closely with communities to install latrines that are safe, hygienic, affordable and easy to install. With proper training, latrines will help people contain waste and reduce disease and contaminated water.

Private and covered toilets also give people dignity. Imagine having to live next to an unflushed toilet. Imagine rushing outside to find any cover you can, while hoping your neighbours can't see you. The fear and shame of exposure often pushes women to wait until after dark to go to the toilet. This also puts them at risk of gendered violence.

When latrines are installed by our partners, a shelter is built around the in-ground toilet. This provides dignity and safety for the people who use the toilet – particularly women and girls.

Our partners work with a community, and the local people help with the construction. By being involved they learn skills they need to maintain these facilities, and even how to

build more latrines in the future. Our past projects show that for every 10 latrines built by the project, the community members built another 20 latrines!

Safe water is always a 'big picture' concept. As well as installing latrines, our partners are working with the communities to support other ways of ensuring they have good access to water, hygiene and sanitation. They hold community workshops on hygiene practices (like handwashing) to help stop sickness. They are working to find better water storage solutions, to ensure accessible water all year round. They will also work with them on important issues like child protection and safety, so vulnerable people are protected when using these community facilities.

WASH is critical in Bangladesh. Your support of Safe Water September gives improved water, sanitation and hygiene to those in need! Whether you're a challenge taker or a challenge supporter, you are helping the Bandarban Hills community members create a cleaner and safer place to live.

Head to [SafeWaterSeptember.org](https://www.SafeWaterSeptember.org) to sign up, find more information, and donate today!

1. <https://www.wateraid.org/bd/bangladesh-facts-and-statistics>

2. <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/pdf/10.1289/ehp.122-A298> "One study found that Bangladeshi children who had access to clean drinking water, improved toilets and facilities for handwashing with soap, for instance, had a roughly 50% improvement in [height-for-age z] scores compared with control children who didn't."

Lin A, et al. Household environmental conditions are associated with enteropathy and impaired growth in rural Bangladesh. *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 89(1):130–137 (2013); doi: 10.4269/ajtmh.12-0629. (<https://europepmc.org/article/PMC/PMC3748469>)

Afghanistan Appeal

In response to the rapidly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, GMP is partnering with Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance to provide accommodation and supplies to people who have fled the violence.

Families have hurriedly left their homes, bringing little with them. They are sheltering in camps that are cramped, unsanitary and lack even the most basic medical facilities. Many displaced families and communities have taken refuge in temporary settlements in Kabul, Herat and Nangarhar. Each settlement accommodates more than 1000 families. With as many as ten people living in one or two rooms in huts, these uprooted individuals and families cannot practice social distancing.

The lack of access to safe water facilities is forcing them to travel long distances to obtain water. Most Internally Displaced Persons living in these settlements and camps have not received any personal protective equipment such as face masks or sanitisers, nor has information been circulated to raise awareness of COVID-19.

Your gift to the GMP Afghanistan Appeal will help provide food, shelter, and medical and sanitation supplies for people impacted by the upheaval in Afghanistan. This will also include people sheltering in Pakistan. These supplies will be dispersed through our trusted ACT Alliance partners who are well placed to distribute support and care for those in need.

Situations such as this can leave us feeling helpless. Through your support, we can directly help people in dire circumstances. Please give now to help those affected by this unrest. You can give potentially lifesaving accommodation and supplies to people in need. www.gmp.org.au/afghanistanappeal

Resource: A Prayer for Afghanistan



GMP has prepared a prayer for Afghanistan that we encourage you to pray, along with your church communities. Please use the link to join with others praying for the people of Afghanistan.

www.gmp.org.au/PrayerForAfghanistan



Wine and Water

*Image sourced from
unsplash.com*

It has always struck me as significant – and possibly controversial – that in John’s Gospel, Jesus’ first miracle could be referred to as something of a ‘party trick’. At the wedding in Cana, Jesus, following Mary’s prompting, turns water into wine. This is not cheap wine, but top shelf, high-quality wine – in my mind, it is Argentine Malbec or, at the least, Yarra Valley Pinot Noir. There is more, however, going on here.

Jesus responds to Mary’s desire that the family hosting the wedding are not shamed because they have run out of wine before the celebrations have ended. Instead of shame, they are honoured: “...the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not

realise where it had come from... Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’” (John 2:9-10).

As we start Safe Water September (SWS) and focus on the need and the right people have to access safe water, what does this passage say to me now? It reminds me that water was not a safe drink in first century Palestine. Wine was much safer. Jesus was helping not only the hosts avoid shame, but helping the guests celebrate safely. It’s a minor point, no doubt, but it resonates with me this month.

Water, for many people today, is still not safe to drink.

With the ravages of COVID-19, it is a privilege to be able to wash our hands and sanitise properly with running, hot water.

It is a privilege to be a part of an organisation that is attempting to turn unsafe practices around water, sanitation and health into safe water practices that give abundant life. It is a privilege to know that in Bangladesh, for instance, we’ll be able to provide women and children (especially) with sanitation devices that no longer shame or expose them to potential harm or ill health.

To me, they feel like core actions of Jesus – focused on how people live, their personhood, and sparing them shame.

Jesus works through the actions of his people to help others. That’s what SWS is all about. Turning harmful situations into ones that no longer bring shame. Helping people live full lives in abundance.

Craig Brown,
GMP Deputy Executive Officer