



Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario Members Newsletter

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Lifewater Canada: Helping to Provide Safe Water to Thousands in Rural West Africa and Kenya

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During the upcoming holiday season it is timely to reflect on those less fortunate than us. In this article, Field Notes draws your attention and provides a short introduction to a charitable organization, Lifewater Canada (Lifewater) whose mission is to provide safe drinking water to many in Africa. One of our own APGO members, Jim Gehrels, P. Geo., is the president of this non-profit organization. We hope to learn more of his experiences and the recent accomplishments of this group of volunteers in the next issue of Field Notes once he returns from Africa this month.

Lifewater is a Christian non-profit organization that trains and equips the rural poor in Africa to drill wells and build washrooms, according to their website (<http://www.lifewater.ca>). As stated on their website, less than half of the people in Africa have access to improved water and sanitation where children are the most vulnerable to sickness and death by drinking unsafe water. In rural Africa, women and girls spend a lot of their day hauling water. Volunteers working from their homes run this organization and as a result their overhead costs (in 1995) are below 4.6% with most of the donated money funding new well construction at 77.9% and the balance used for training and Health & Hygiene programs. Most of Lifewater's water and sanitation projects are in Liberia and Nigeria. Lifewater Liberia started in 1995.

Annual newsletters from 1995 to 2005 about the organization are posted on the website. The newsletters provide interesting stories from the field about the organizations work. In 2005, drill crews drilled wells for 37 villages providing safe water for 20,000 people in orphanages, villages and schools. Since rebel groups have been disarmed in Liberia, rural villages are being rebuilt and their local drill team "is being swamped with requests for help". Their goal in 2006 was to respond by drilling 50 new wells in 2006 providing safe drinking water for additional 25,000 people. A large part of their Health and Hygiene Program is education. During one of the training workshops in 2005, "a Liberian woman shared how many of her babies had died and realized during the workshop that this may be due to the local custom of giving month-old infants a drink from the local water hole." Now she can teach other mothers to drink only from a well with a new handpump.

The website is detailed and provides information of past and future projects as well as online training manuals, bulletins and tutorials. An extensive list of Well construction details for the new wells are also posted on the website including photographs of the previous unsafe water supply along with a letter from the community. Donors as individuals, companies and other charities contribute to Lifewater in many ways. They can donate money by sponsoring a village well, or school washroom, as well as donate time by translating manuals into French, Spanish or Portuguese, drawing educational pictures for traditional oral societies, developing well construction standards, writing technical notes, research and much more. They need people knowledgeable about drilling, pump construction or engineering to become trainers in these countries. If you are interested in traveling and desire to help others you get further information by visiting their webpage (http://www.lifewater.ca/lif_help.htm).

For more information on APGO, please contact info@apgo.net

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Field Notes is published by APGO and is edited by [Wendy Diaz, P.Geol.](#) If you have comments or wish to contribute material to this newsletter, please contact [Wendy Diaz, P.Geol.](#), or [Norman Williams, P.Eng.](#), Executive Director/Registrar.

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