

Safe Water Provision, Malawi



Background

As access to clean water is the number one priority in rural Africa, the High Five Club has made water provision in wildlife areas one of its core deliverables in the communities we partner with. To date we have sunk wells in Zambia and Uganda, and we are thrilled to announce that we have now expanded our programme into Malawi.

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Our long-standing community partner in the rural north of Malawi, the **Brown Munthali Foundation** (also known to H5C members as the Happy Faith Based Organisation in relation to its orphans programme) shared with us how a young child in their community had been badly injured by a crocodile whilst collecting water from the river – a river feared in the area for its high density of crocodiles at certain times of the year. The child sadly died of his injuries shortly afterwards in hospital, and upon asking more questions we discovered that many children and adults in this community had been killed in the same way whilst collecting drinking water, as the river was their own source of water. The community we learnt also periodically killed ‘problem’ crocodiles in the river near their villages, in a futile attempt to make it safer to collect water. As crocodiles move up and down



rivers this strategy only served to indiscriminately kill crocodiles, and the problem of people getting attacked whilst collecting water of course continued. A vicious cycle for both people and wildlife.



High Five Club Support: We have joined hands together with the Brown Munthali Foundation (BMF) to sink wells in the community at points which can be reached by all villagers, removing the need for people to collect water from the river.

Two locations were identified which would serve the community well and an experienced local well digger was contracted to construct the wells. The community hand moulded the bricks out of mud (fired by using fallen wood only), collected the sand for making the cement from a dry river bed, and provided casual labour as their contribution towards the water project. High Five Club provided the funds to pay the well digger, to purchase the cement, pipes, concrete culverts and for the hand pumping mechanisms to dispense the water. The community have set up two water committees who have taken on the responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the wells into the future to ensure they are sustainable.

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Conservation meetings were also held with the community re river ecology, crocodiles and their importance, and the local Chiefs and elders announced to their community that there should be no more periodic killing of crocodiles in their area. The villagers were united in this decision now understanding crocodile behaviour and that they no longer had to collect water from the river.

Another win-win situation for people and wildlife!

It was not easy going constructing the 2 wells. In all the years H5C has been implementing water projects this was the most challenging. The community is situated on rocky land (most marginalised communities in Africa have been moved onto land that is least productive). Well 1 build went relatively smoothly, but because of the depth it took to reach the water table a mechanical hand-powered pump and pipes needed to be installed to enable water to be drawn to the top.

As well 2 was being dug numerous huge boulders were encountered that had to be painstakingly unearthed and lifted up the well shaft by hand using a pulley system. This was back-breaking work for the community and it is a testimony to their desperate need for clean, safe water that they did not give up but endured. The well digger went down the shaft in a metal bucket on a rope over 50 feet to dig out this well before the water table was reached. As he worked tirelessly at this depth he had a hose pipe in his mouth to bring oxygen down to him from the surface. **Imagine that effort.** Concrete rings also had to be purchased and manipulated by hand (they weigh a lot believe me!) down the well shaft to line the walls to prevent it from collapsing in on itself (and the well digger) at this depth. The solution would have been to drill a borehole, but in Malawi boreholes are expensive and as H5C we do not have the funds to go down that route.

This second well also needed a mechanical hand-powered pump of course to draw the water to the top. Additionally, bathing chambers were built for the youngest children so they do not have to wash in the river during those times of the year when the crocodiles are most active in their stretch of river. This was a very useful addition to this water project and as you can see from the header photo at the top of this update the children love it!



Well 1 with its hand pump

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The 2 wells were dug at a total cost to H5C of £3,152 bringing safe clean water to over 1,000 people. The cost of these wells was significantly higher than for our water wells projects in Zambia and Uganda (more than twice the cost), due to the challenge of the area's topology. Well 1 cost £1026 and well 2 cost £2126.

See photos of construction process below.

For more information, or if you would like to help sink another well in this community, contact Cheryl@highfiveclub.co.uk

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Photos taken during construction of well 2:

