

Clean-Water Initiative Aids Millions in Africa

For more than two decades, the Church has been involved in clean-water projects in more than 100 countries. In Africa alone, these projects have blessed the lives of more than four million people by providing wells, water storage and delivery systems, and water purification.

One such project took place on Idugo Island, off the coast of Mozambique. Most of the 15,000 people who live on the island work on family farms, fish the surrounding waters of the Indian Ocean, or work at evaporation ponds to gather salt from seawater. The island has no running water, electricity, roads, or vehicles. Access to the island is by handmade boats or dugout canoes.

For centuries, the only drinking water sources on Idugo have been shallow wells dug by hand. The wells are continually filled with silt and debris. They provide muddy, hard-to-access water. During the rainy season, water becomes polluted, causing cholera, diarrhea, and other diseases.

When Church humanitarian missionaries heard about the conditions on Idugo, they met with community leaders there. Together they worked out a plan for Church Humanitarian Services to provide materials, tools, and instructions to build 10 cement-lined wells with steel lids, each capable of serving 1,000 people. The missionaries



On Idugo Island, Mozambique, villagers and local dignitaries attend a ceremony where official community use of a well begins.

would provide hygiene and sanitation training, and villagers would provide all necessary labor for building and maintaining the wells.

From a staging point on the mainland, four dump truck loads of gravel, 300 bags of cement, two loads of sand, steel rebar, and custom-made steel cement forms were ferried over to the islands. Supplies were then carried across the island on foot or by handcart. Several Church members from Quelimane, Mozambique, camped out on the island for three months to help with teaching and construction.

Wells were designed to allow rainwater drainage, eliminating contamination. In some communities, residents built wooden fences and brick pathways around the wells, using brick they learned to make themselves with materials donated by the Church.

At official ceremonies, ownership of the wells was turned over to the people of each village. Several residents who had worked on the

wells expressed gratitude that their newly learned skills—making bricks, working with cement and reinforcing it with steel, and using tools—would enable them to find additional work. Others expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn leadership skills.

Following the next rainy season, no waterborne diseases were reported in the villages with wells.

According to the World Health Organization, more than one billion people worldwide lack access to clean water. Thanks to the Church's clean-water initiative, that number is being reduced through a process that involves community members in planning and implementing projects, providing labor to build needed facilities, receiving training, and maintaining completed resources.

In addition to clean-water projects throughout Africa, the Church sponsors clean-water initiatives in Asia, Central America, Eastern Europe, India, Indonesia, the Pacific Islands, South America, Southeast Asia, and other locations around the world. ■