



Reducing Risk

Disaster risk reduction combines efforts analyse the causes of disasters with initiatives that reduce their effects. Reducing people’s vulnerability through wise environmental management and improving preparedness are examples of this.¹

The weather extremes that El Niño has caused have resulted in a wide range of health problems, including disease outbreaks and malnutrition. Some places, such as in Paraguay where floods have affected more than 100,000 people, have received more rain than normal. In Tanzania and Zambia, excessive rainfall has caused severe outbreaks of cholera.² The climate may also have caused the spread of the Zika virus in Brazil and other countries in South America.³

Too much water causes disease epidemics during major disasters and too little water causes children to skip school as they spend hours finding and collecting it. Diarrhoea, which is caused by unclean water, can kill small children very quickly once they become dehydrated, making clean water critical at all times, not only during emergencies. (wvi.org/cleanwater) Clean water and satisfactory sanitation are among the first interventions that help stabilise populations affected by disaster – both in the short and long term. As a consequence, World Vision prioritised water and sanitation programmes a number of years ago, not only to boost development, but also to bolster communities against the effects of disasters.⁴

Zambia

Zambia, like much of Southern Africa endured abnormally dry conditions through 2015 and much of 2016. This caused acute water shortages that resulted in a cholera outbreak. Over 1,000 cases of cholera were reported in 2016; over 80 percent in the capital city, Lusaka. 31 people have died from the disease. As a consequence, UNICEF launched the largest ever cholera vaccination campaign in April in Lusaka. Over half a million people are planned to receive the vaccine in order to curb the outbreak that began in February in the city’s overcrowded townships.⁵

Children in Zambia

4.8 million people live without access to clean water

6.6 million who have no access to sanitation.

Malaria and diarrhea causes a quarter of all deaths of children under 5

WHO & UNICEF

¹ <https://www.unisdr.org/who-we-are/what-is-drr>

² <http://www.who.int/hac/crises/el-nino/el-nino-funding-2016/en/>

³ [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)00256-7/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)00256-7/fulltext)

⁴ <http://wvi.org/cleanwater>

⁵ <http://reliefweb.int/report/zambia/zambia-cholera-outbreak-unicef-situation-report-2-3-march-2016>

Water

World Vision has been working in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for more than 50 years, starting in the 1960s with small water projects in individual communities. In the subsequent decades, programs expanded through the West Africa Water Initiative – a large public-private partnership. In 2010, World Vision scaled-up its investment in WASH investing in 12 countries with high need – ten in Africa. More than 5.8 million people have been reached with water, sanitation & hygiene programs by World Vision between 2010-2014.

To quell the spread of disease in Zambia, World Vision has drilled over 1,000 boreholes for 364,063 people, including 177,061 children. 580 other water points were repaired during the crisis and they now provide safe water to over 200,000 people.

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Alvina's Story - *I no longer get sick or miss school*

"I was always scared to walk to the stream every day for water," recalls Alvina (13). One of four children, she lives with her family in a small hut in a remote mountainous village in southern Zambia. The family relies on a shallow stream to provide water. It looks clean, but it is actually dirty and unsafe to drink. Cows, goats and pigs defecate, bathe and drink in it.

"We used to wake up at 5am to walk to the stream," Alvina says. "It was still dark when we left home and we heard different animals along the way. We had to queue up before getting a chance to draw water and often got back home late," she says.

"I help mum with cleaning the dishes and sweeping the house after fetching water. I did not always finish my work on time to prepare for school because of the long wait at the queue for water. Often, I go to school late and very tired. I would sleep in class and miss out on many lessons. I had very little time to study or do my homework," Alvina says in a small but steady voice.

Alvina performed badly in school and this got worse when she contracted dysentery – a waterborne disease. "Missing school always made me sad. I prayed to God each time I got sick," she said. The drought caused by El Niño dried up the stream completely. Everyone in Alvina's village was forced to walk another eight kilometres every day for water. Once they reached the water source, it was crowded with people from other villages - waiting for water was a long ordeal.

In 2016, World Vision drilled a borehole just three kilometres from Alvina's house. It changed her life. Together with other children, she can now go to school on time, focus on her lessons and pass her exams with flying colors. "I am very grateful to World Vision for bringing us clean water. We no longer have to wake up very early in the morning to queue for water. We always get enough sleep and are able to go to school on time," Alvina says smiling.

World Vision also taught the community of 250 people how to improve their sanitation and hygiene practices. "I no longer get sick or miss school and I pass all my exams. I am always third in class.," she said. Like many other children in her community, Alvina has big dreams for her future. She hopes to finish school one day and become a nurse so she could help all the young children in her village who miss school because they are sick.

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