

Reader's Response

- 1 How do people harm water supplies directly? How do they cause changes to water supplies indirectly?
- 2 Give an example of a local group working with an international group to improve water supplies for a community. Is this a good model to follow? Support your answer with details from the article.
- 3 Are the solutions described in the article long-term fixes to the global water problem? Why or why not?

Writer's Response

- 1 Describe the organization of this article. Is this an effective way to organize an article? Explain.
- 2 How do the anecdotes add to the article?
- 3 How do the maps and other visual aids help readers understand the information? What other graphics could be used for this article? Where would you place them?

Be the Writer

Imagine that you live in one of the places described in the article and you are on a committee to educate your community about improving and protecting the water supply. Plan a public-awareness campaign. You might sketch posters, write a brief speech or series of public-service announcements, prepare illustrated brochures, or plan activities that will get the word out effectively.

Words to Know

contaminate **refuse**
sanitation **receptacles**

From the Writer

Your mission as an expository writer is this: to explain something so that your readers can understand it better. This requires that your information be presented in as clear and as reasonable a way as possible. Good writers keep this in mind from the very beginning, even while researching.

Focusing the topic is key. Some writers try to cast their nets wide to make sure they get enough information. The problem with this approach is that you may get far more information than you know what to do with! This writer chose a narrow topic: how problems with the water supply affect people. This topic still produces a lot of information, but it isn't overwhelming to either the writer or the reader.

Organizing the information carefully helps the writer write, but it also ensures that the finished product will have a logical flow. Are there groups of details that belong together to help make specific points? "Water Troubles" uses anecdotes to show different problems and solutions. The main theme—that people depend on their water supplies and have a responsibility to protect them—is highlighted by the careful arrangement of details.

Expository writers consider not only how to present information in words, but also how the text can be made better with visuals. Maps, photographs, graphs, and diagrams can make an article more appealing to a reader. The visuals can also help present important or complicated information in a more understandable way. The result is that readers "get" what the writer explains. Mission accomplished!

Water Troubles

Earth's most valuable resource is at risk. Can we keep it flowing?

Until recently, Cormelia Gogu, 12, and other students in a small town in Romania didn't have any clean water at their school. Old, rundown pipes made it dangerous for kids to drink the water or even wash their hands. When kids did use the water, it made them sick.

These days, things are better at Cormelia's school. A Romanian aid group, working with the U.S.-based Earth Day Network, has rebuilt the school's pipes and bathrooms. "Now we can drink water during our breaks," Cormelia says. "We can wash our hands."

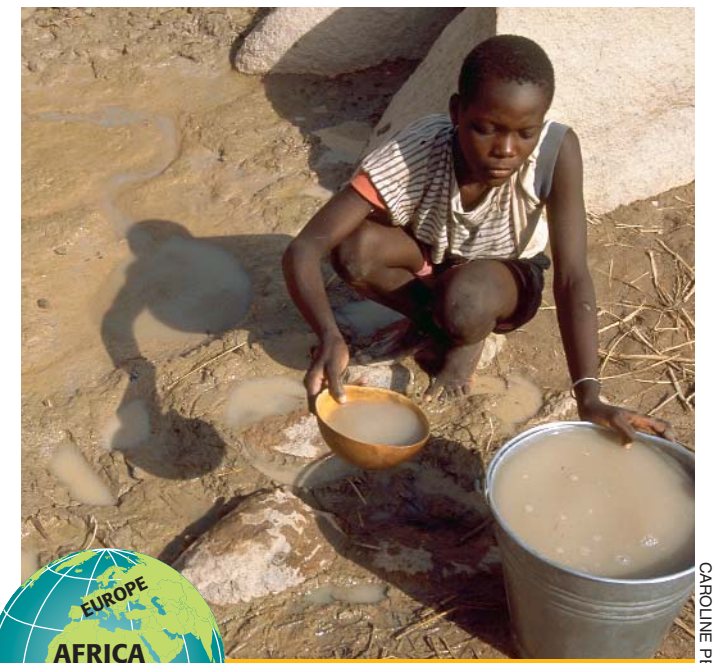
Water for Life

In some parts of the world, all you have to do to get clean water is turn on the tap. A simple turn of the faucet gives us gallons of clean, fresh water. But like many people around the world, Cormelia knows that water is a precious gift. Eighty of the world's 193 countries suffer from serious water shortages. That's as much as two-fifths of the world's population. The problem is greatest in the developing nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. But other countries are beginning to face water shortages, also. For example, in parts of the U.S. West and Southwest, water supplies are in danger of being used up.

The United Nations, the World Health Organization, and other international groups are working hard to do something about this situation. They are trying to protect the world's freshwater supplies and deliver it to those who need it most. The groups are digging wells and building new

water systems for some of the world's poorest communities. Still, 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water. Aid groups hope to cut that number in half by 2015.

Rose Mbwawa, 11, lives in the village of Mbabala in Tanzania, a nation in Africa. Although Mbabala is only a 30-minute drive from Tanzania's capital, until recently the people there did not have a modern, clean water system. The only source of water was an open well, basically a hole in the ground. People obtained their water by lowering buckets into the well on ropes. The well had no cover, so dirt and garbage could fall into the water and **contaminate** it.



GHANA It took this girl three hours to collect her water, which is not safe to drink.

CAROLINE PENN—WATERAID

Then WaterAid stepped in. The organization helped locals build four new wells in Mbabala. The new wells are all capped with hand pumps. That means the water is protected from outside dirt and garbage. All it takes is a few gentle pushes on the pump handle to get clean water out of the spout. This simple change has made a tremendous difference in the lives of people like Rose Mbwawa.

"Every day I get up and have a wash, brush my teeth, do some cleaning around the home, and then go to school," she says. "After school, I go to collect water for my family. In the old days, everything was terrible. We all got sick because of



PAKISTAN In rural areas, women and children often walk miles to collect water. The parched country is suffering from many years of drought.

As a result of the project, illness rates in Mabuia dropped almost to zero. And there was an added bonus—many girls who used to spend all day fetching water could now go to school. Today, Fatima happily watches her son Fernando, 13. “By the time Isabel was Fernando’s age, she had been sick a dozen times,”

dirty water. But now that we’ve got clean water, it’s much better. People do not get ill now.”

Water or Crocodiles?

For the people of Mabuia, in the African nation of Angola, the problem wasn’t an open well. It was the crocodiles in the river. It took hours to walk to the river, and then you had to watch for the crocs as you filled your jugs or buckets. One year, seven children were attacked while collecting water. Still, they had no choice; it was face the crocodiles or go without water.

However, even when the water carriers made it back to the village safely, there was another problem. The water from the river was polluted and carried disease-causing germs. Many people were sick from drinking it, especially children who suffered from severe diarrhea. Many died.

In 1999, tragedy struck the family of Fatima Kituxi. Her daughter Isabel died as a result of disease caused by the drinking water. “Isabel was always sick, she could just never get strong,” Fatima says.

In 2000, UNICEF, along with the Angolan government, built a pipeline bringing water to Fatima’s village. A filtering system keeps the water clean. Besides tap water, the project also included new bathrooms or latrines. Safe disposal of human waste is an important part of keeping water supplies clean.

Fatima says. “This boy has never once had diarrhea. Not once.”

Refreshing News

The planet’s water problems can be solved, Mansoor Ali says. He is UNICEF’s senior adviser for water, the environment, and **sanitation**. But it will not be easy to satisfy the world’s thirst. “It’s going to take some major changes in how we think about water,” he says, “and how we value, manage, and use water.”

It will also take more work by international aid groups and governments. The village of Piedras Grandes, Nicaragua, is a good example of positive



EAST TIMOR UNICEF is helping to install clean-water systems and hand pumps, like this one, in the country’s poorest villages.



TANZANIA The country has been in a drought for three years. Water once flowed where these women stand.

cooperation among groups and government. Until 2002, a nearby river in this Central American country was the only source of drinking water. That was the year people in the town formed a Drinking Water and Sanitation Committee. The committee was made up of people from 15 households. Together, and with help from UNICEF and the Nicaraguan government, they built a new well in the town. They also set out to improve health standards through education.

Maria Dolores Ocón, 16, is one of the volunteers who works for the committee. “We make door-to-door visits every two weeks,” she says. “We see that the households are keeping their backyards clean, using their latrines well, burning and burying their **refuse**, and eliminating pools of water where mosquitoes might breed. We also check that **receptacles** containing water are

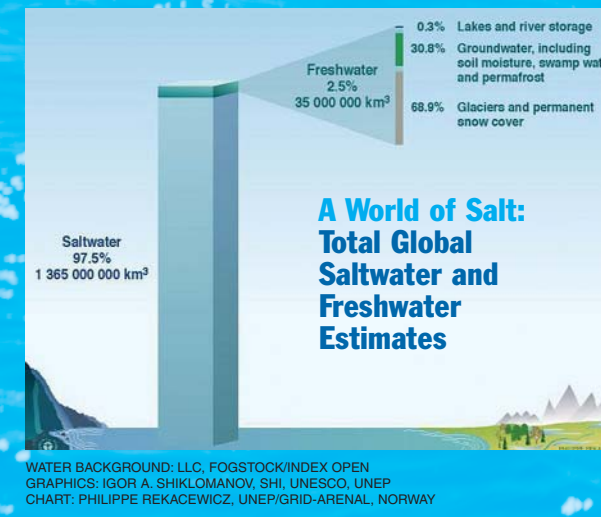


SOUTH AFRICA This wheel is a fun way to collect water. As kids spin the wheel, it pumps clean water to a nearby tap.

Where Is The Water?

Earth is about 75% water, but most of that is salty water in the world’s oceans. Only about 3% of the water in the world is freshwater, and most of the freshwater in the world is frozen in ice caps and glaciers. So only about 1% of the water in the world is available for human use. Sadly, we’re draining this usable water at an alarming rate. We’re also harming water sources with chemicals and pollutants.

At the same time, water use is rapidly increasing. Over the last century, water use increased at twice the rate of the world’s population. All over the world, there are areas where wells are being drained faster than they can be refilled. There are only a few things that can be done. Precious water resources, like aquifers (water in the ground) have to be protected from pollution and overuse. People have to learn to conserve water, even in countries where there has always been enough.



covered to avoid contamination, and that empty ones are cleaned out.”

Thanks to the new well and the efforts of young people like Maria, life in Piedras Grandes has changed for the better. The villagers now have clean water, and they are learning to stay healthy. In just a short time, these simple measures have brought the number of childhood illnesses way down.

Projects like the one in Piedras Grandes or Cormelia Gogu’s school in Romania show that progress can be made. It is possible to bring clean water to people everywhere, if local groups and international aid groups work together, and if they have support from people around the world. With these efforts, it’s possible that someday everyone will be able to get clean, fresh water with just a turn of the tap.