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News about Water For People's work in Malawi, the "warm heart of Africa."



MALAWI AT-A-GLANCE

Population:	13,013,926 (among the most population-dense African countries)
Languages:	English, Chichewa
Per capita income:	US\$600
Life expectancy:	42 years
Under-five mortality rate:	125/1,000 live births
Where We Work:	Rumpfi District Chikwawa District Blantyre (peri-urban areas)

Source: World Factbook and UNICEF 2006

Water For People has been working in Malawi since 2000 and has successfully served tens of thousands of Africa's poorest people with the sustainable provision of safe drinking water and improved sanitation. Water-related diseases, including cholera and typhoid fever, are common throughout the country. It is estimated that sanitation coverage in rural areas is less than 30%, so improving sanitation has been an important focus of Water For People's work.

From Feces to Fertilizer: Water For People's Innovative Approach to Sanitation Wins \$200,000 World Bank Award

by John Kayser, Communications Manager, Water For People



Who knew that human feces could be converted into a valuable fertilizer for crops?

Some might question this practice, but in reality, it is completely safe and the resulting fertilizer is excellent. This decidedly "green" concept formed the basis for Water For People's award-winning project proposal at the Development Marketplace, a global competition that encourages innovative solutions to the world's biggest development challenges.

In May, Water For People was selected to win the maximum award of \$200,000, and was one of only 22 grants awarded from a field of more than 2,900 applications. The proposed sanitation project in Malawi is designed to reduce the incidence of diarrhea through hygiene education, the use of children's latrines, and the production of compost for sale. What's more, the program is self-sustaining and will generate much-needed income for some of the poorest people on the planet.



The impact of compost on agriculture. The maize on the left was planted with composted human waste; on the right, commercial fertilizer. Photo: © Water For People / by Kate Harawa

From Feces to Fertilizer... (continued)

Funded by the World Bank and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the global Development Marketplace grants ranged from \$50,000 to \$200,000. The competition is held every 12 to 18 months by the World Bank and brought finalists to Washington, D.C., for an in-depth review by a jury of World Bank officials and development professionals. Among the finalists in attendance was Water For People's country coordinator for Malawi, Kate Harawa, who visited the United States for the first time in her life. Needless to say, it was a productive visit.

Specifically, the goal of Water For People's proposal is to reduce diarrhea by 40% in two rural Malawian Traditional Authority Areas, including 31 schools and more than 100 villages, by improving sanitation practices and facilities. The multifaceted approach targets toddlers and young children by promoting the use of ecological latrines while eliminating open defecation.

The program engages children as change agents to introduce improved hygiene practices to the household, a model that is thought to be effective for promoting long-term changes in health and hygiene practices in the developing world. Children



A child-size "arbor-loo" latrine provides children with a safe sanitation solution.
Photo: © Water For People / by Kate Harawa

throughout the region will receive child-size "arbor-loos" that allow them to defecate safely and hygienically. Ash and dirt are added to feces after each use, which helps eliminate odors and promote composting. When the pit latrine is full, the slab can be moved to a new location and a tree planted in its place.

The program targets adults by making full-scale composting latrines available to each household under a creative financing arrangement in which the cost of the latrines is paid back over time with the income generated from the sale of the compost. Once the debt is repaid, the family can sell its compost for much-needed income. (Soil is poor in much of Malawi and fertilizer is a sought-after commodity.)

"Here's a program that transforms fecal waste from a health threat to an income-generating product," says Ned Breslin, Water For People's director of International Programs. "It creates an unsubsidized, sustainable sanitation service that can be replicated by other communities. It is also creatively linking local governments, NGOs, and the private sector to improve health. Everybody wins."

Breslin and Harawa together defended the proposal before jurors at the Washington event. "We competed in an environment in which many jurors at the World Bank felt that water and sanitation should not be included in this year's competition," confides Breslin. "Many felt that awards should be offered to more traditional health interventions, like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and immunization. Our selection suggests that our work stood out, as it offered a unique way to tackle diarrhea, which is the second largest killer of children worldwide. It also suggests that the centrality of water and sanitation to improved health is understood."

The award means the program will become a reality. Water For People-Malawi expects to receive the funds from this award in October 2007, and is already beginning to implement the program in two districts.

Water For People has high hopes for the successful implementation of this pilot program, not only in the two districts but across Malawi. "The real mark of success will be a measurable change in hygiene practices and a decrease in the incidence of diarrhea among children," says Breslin. "We'll be monitoring progress closely, but I have every confidence that this program will deliver results on many levels." ■

Our mission: Water For People helps people in developing countries improve their quality of life by supporting the development of locally sustainable drinking water resources, sanitation facilities and health and hygiene education programs.

Our vision is a world where all people have access to safe drinking water and sanitation; a world where no one suffers or dies from a water- or sanitation-related disease



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