

# WATER AND HUNGER



## *Improving Sustainability in Rural Africa*

### **The water cost of food**

Consider the following foods we take for granted...

<b>Food</b>	<b>Water Needed to Produce (in litres)</b>
1 Glass of milk	200
Cup of Coffee	140
Bag of Chips	185
Slice of Bread	40
Egg	135
Apple	70
Hamburger	2,400 !!

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Relieving hunger in Africa has to begin with access to clean water. It may seem simple, but we forget that without access to a reliable source of water, food is hard to grow and even more difficult to preserve and prepare.

It takes huge amounts of water to grow food. Just think, globally we use 70% of our water sources for agriculture and irrigation, and only 10% on domestic uses.

Water is fundamental to relieving hunger in the developing world. 84% of people who don't have access to improved water, also live in rural areas, where they live principally through subsistence agriculture. Sometimes, areas that experience a lack of water suffer because of poor water management, but more often it is a relatively simple economic issue that can be addressed. This is the difference between physical and economic scarcity.

## **The Rural-Urban divide**

In Sub-Saharan Africa, people in urban areas are twice as likely as people in rural areas to have clean, safe water. Another way that we see the urban-rural divide is in sanitation. While rural areas often have less access to sanitation facilities, in Sub-Saharan Africa the situation is very poor. Only 24% of the rural population, and 44% of the urban population have access to sanitation facilities. This means that less than one in three people in Sub-Saharan Africa have access to a proper toilet.

## **There is hope**

A small investment in a clean, safe source of water can have a huge impact on both crop production and the nutrition of a community. In fact, one of the most encouraging things we find when we return to sites where wells have been installed is the many small gardens that have popped up all around.

When we ask communities what improvements they've seen as a result of clean water, many send us pictures of their crops - proud of the progress they've made.

Sometimes the technologies we fund specifically target increased crop production. For example, we fund weirs (sub-surface sand dams) in very dry places where seasonal water flows can be captured and stored. The dams trap rain water on the few rainy days of the year and over time, ground water levels rise.

People can then collect or store the water for drinking. The leftover water seeps into the ground and creates more fertile fields. Simple sustainable irrigation in these dry areas becomes possible. You [see a real weir project here](#) or [read Bridget's story](#) to see how such a project really can make a difference.