

Bringing clean water to a remote jungle village: the inside story

In the space of just a few months, supporters like you have totally transformed what it means to live and grow up in Tombohuaun.

This remote village, deep in the jungle of Sierra Leone, is home to the most determined, strong and fun-loving group of families you might ever hope to meet. The overwhelming response from our supporters to the 'Untapped' campaign, coupled with our expertise, and the hard work and enthusiasm of all the people of Tombohuaun, has resulted in every single woman, man and child having access to clean water, toilets and hygiene knowledge for the first time ever.

In this report, you can learn more about the changes that have been made possible, and get a glimpse into life in this most special of villages.

You have rewritten the future for Tombohuaun

From this...



Just a few months ago, this muddy pool in the jungle served as the village's only water source.

...to this



Thanks to your incredible generosity, Tombohuaun now has a handpump, giving the whole village clean water whenever they need it.

You might not initially realise it when meeting people from Tombohuaun, such is their warmth and energy, but life in this village has been indescribably tough. When civil war broke out in 1991 the village was taken over by rebels, and everyone had to flee. Those who survived returned a decade later to nothing – everything had been destroyed.

Over the last 15 years the people of the village pulled together to rebuild their lives, but one thing in particular was the cause of fear, sickness and tragedy. There was no clean water – families had no choice but rely on a muddy pool in the jungle, where they scooped water into buckets to carry back home to drink. This water gave people worms, made children sick, and did the unspeakable thing – took children's lives.

But this January, everything changed. And it changed thanks to people like you. Your kind support has funded a project that has brought everyone in this remote jungle village clean, accessible water, all year round.

The village of Tombohuaun – the future starts now

All families have now built a toilet instead of going in the open



A muddy pool in the jungle, which used to serve as the village's only water source, is no longer relied on

The new water pump – supplying the village with clean water all year round

Dish racks have been built to store crockery and cooking equipment off the floor

To begin with, we worked with the village to improve their knowledge on hygiene practices – everything from washing hands, to storing crockery off the floor. We showed people how to build toilets using materials from the jungle, instead of going in the open. And finally, thanks to your incredible generosity, we installed a hand pump, giving people the ability to draw clean water whenever they need it.

Excavating the borehole beneath the hand pump was done manually, with soil being drawn up on a pulley. The walls of this hole were then lined with cement, stone, sand and iron rods, followed by iron casing with a polished brass liner, to support the borehole and protect the water from contaminants. Finally, the pump was installed, and the head wall for water buckets constructed. WaterAid's role throughout included supervision, monitoring and providing technical support. And the men and women of the village were involved in every step – from digging the borehole and mixing cement, to becoming local experts on maintenance and repair.

As well as the water pump, WaterAid funded the cement, the pipes, the specialist contractors, the tools and the training – and now, every single family in this village is benefiting. Thanks to people like you, parents can give their children water to drink without fearing the deadly diarrhoea that has stolen the lives of so many in the past. Children will be healthier, and able to go to school. Money once used for medicines can be invested in farming.

The future for children growing up here now looks very different.

“The difference is that, one: runny stomachs are going to be reduced drastically. Secondly, children will no longer go into the bush to collect water, as prior to this time they used to go there and sometimes they were confronted by snakes and other dangerous animals. This will be the difference, they will no longer go to the bush, thanks to God for that.” Matu, 40, mother, grandmother, and life and soul of the village.

Sellu's Story

Sellu is a cocoa farmer, fisherman, and father to six-year-old Nancy (pictured at the old water source on page one). This kind, gentle and generous man has already lost one child to water-related diseases, and he believes the dirty water Nancy had to drink has also stunted her growth. Sellu talked to us about his involvement in the project, and the difference clean water will make to his family.

Sellu (pictured right) helping install the iron casing in the well. Photo by Fatmata, aged 20



"I helped with the construction of the new water well. I provided labour and I also mobilised the youth to construct the well, because the well is very good for us, it keeps us away from diseases that we get from water.

"Most of the sickness we used to get from drinking dirty water will no longer be affecting us, we will no longer be having runny stomachs which cause us to go to the hospital. We will keep the proceeds from the harvest for the maintenance of the well, so if anything goes wrong with the well, we can easily take from the savings." Sellu

The day the hand pump was first used in the village was enormously special, and in true Tombchuau style, the celebrations were huge.



We have some beautiful footage taken that day – and I'd love you to see it. Just visit: wateraid.org/uk/untapped-update

Precious moments: capturing the journey to clean water

As part of the project in Tombohuaun, we gave cameras to the women, men and children who live there, so they could capture what mattered to them as the work progressed.

Using a camera was a new experience for everyone, but the photos taken reveal so much I thought I'd share some of them with you. They portray not just how much the community were involved in the project, but what daily life is like for the parents, grandparents and youngsters living here.

I found this insight into life in Tombohuaun fascinating, and I hope you do too.



"This is where we decided to build the water well. Some elders came together to do some prayers, so I took this picture to show our tradition, that before doing anything we do some ceremony."

Photo by Kempah Ginnah, aged 42

As the primary water gatherers, women decided where the water point would be installed, rather than the male elders and village chiefs. The site also had to be at least 100 yards away from graves, dustbins and latrines.



"This is where they are building the water well and I am happy because we are going to have a well in my village. Ibrahim is mixing the sand and the cement." Photo by Kokoyeh, aged 8

We have learned that when people have ownership of their water supply, they are much more invested in its maintenance and repair, and it will last long into the future. That's why including the community in every aspect of the project is so important. The people of Tombohuaun couldn't wait to get involved, and worked incredibly hard to make this project a reality.



"Mariama Mustapha, our village Chair Lady, helping in the construction of the well. She was very happy and she was organising the women to help. I took this photo to show that it is not only the men who are working but the women also." Photo by Tailu, age unknown

"This the finished hand pump that WaterAid provided for us, I want them to know we have access to clean water now." Photo by Kempah, aged 42



The India Mark II pump is the government recommended pump for Sierra Leone. Spare parts are accessible, and are not expensive. The floor surrounding the pump is built on a slight slope so any water spillage drains into a channel rather than sitting stagnant.



"I took this picture because I love the way they are building the toilet." Photo by Kokoyeh, aged 8

All materials for building latrines are local – people use very strong sticks from the jungle to create the latrine platform, which covers a pit. A superstructure is built over the pit, with a roof. The walls are generally made of sticks and mud, and the roof is made of palm thatch.

"At first I was putting my dishes on the floor but now that WaterAid have taught us how to take care of our things, this is the way we are doing it." Photo by Fatmata, aged 20

Hygiene education was a key part of the project in Tombhuawn. With a new understanding about the links between faeces, flies, water and food, families used local materials to build dish racks to keep their plates and pans off the floor.





“My uncle had just harvested these cacao in his garden. This is what we survive from and this is what my uncle does to take care of us.” Photo by Jeneba, aged 13



“These are my sisters and my elder brother. I took this picture to show how we prepare to do our fishing. This is the fishing net.” Photo by Morie, aged 25

Cacao and palm oil provide people in Tombohuaun with precious income. Now that families are drinking clean water, more of that income can be invested in developing the community, rather than paying for expensive medicines.



Photo by Sellu. We asked him what he'd enjoyed the most about the photo project. He laughed out loud and said:

“Taking a photo of my wife for the very first time! Also the photos of my children. So even if they are not close to me, I will look at those photos. Ohh, I will enjoy that!”

Many people said that they were taking pictures of loved ones – having not had cameras before, these photos have become very precious!

From every man, woman and child in Tombohuaun, a huge, huge thank you.

If you'd like to see more photos of family life in Tombohuaun, and their journey to clean water, visit wateraid.org/uk/untapped-update