

The Organization charity: water

*Recorded by Sara Neville
Penn State Brandywine, May 2, 2011*

Founder's Story

Scott Harrison used to be a big-shot club promoter. He was rich, partied with celebrities and people in the fashion industry, drank expensive alcohol, and didn't care what anyone thought of him because he felt he was on top of the world.

In 2004, he realized he was desperately unhappy in New York City and wanted to revitalize his Christian faith, so he took a job aboard a floating hospital called Mercy Ships, working as their photojournalist. Scott got up close and personal with some of the most devastating diseases taking lives in West Africa. He saw,

- *"Enormous, suffocating tumors - cleft lips, faces eaten by bacteria from water-borne diseases. I learned many of these medical conditions also existed here in the west, but were taken care of - never allowed to progress" ([Founder's Story](#), 2011).*

After months of prayer and hope, Scott found words that fueled a new idea: "In Colossians 3, the Bible instructs readers to 'put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness'" ([Founder's Story](#), 2011) ... that was the beginning of **charity: water**.

Why Water?

Scott wanted to help people like those he saw as part of Mercy Ships. He chose to focus on water because he saw what a profound impact unsafe drinking water had on the lives of those he met while working in West Africa.

"Right now, almost a billion people on the planet don't have access to clean, safe drinking water. That's one in eight of us" ([Why Water?](#), 2011). Water not only affects health, but it has a huge impact on women and children, economies, and food supply. Without safe drinking water and proper sanitation, our future is in danger.

Mission

Which brings us to **charity: water's** mission: To bring clean & safe drinking water to people in developing nations through the use of "simple things that work" ([Mission](#), 2011): freshwater wells, rainwater catchments & sand filters. The nonprofit organization wants to introduce us in the developed world to people in poverty-stricken areas who don't have the same quality of life.

Harrison's Changes to Non-Profit Infrastructure

Not only that, but Scott wanted to show the world something they hadn't seen from non-profit organizations before. He wanted to prove to his donors that 100% of their donated money was going towards **charity: water's** mission. So, he created the 100% model.

In order to keep his promise, Scott had to figure out how to pay for administrative costs. If 100% of donations goes toward cement, pipes, taps, gas for trucks and drill rigs, salaries for drillers, and hygiene training, how would **charity: water** pay for their own employees? Air fares? Office space? Pens? Pencils? Paper clips?

This is where Scott tapped into The Well. The Well is a group of philanthropists and celebrities who have donated money to support **charity: water's** operating costs. The organization is also backed by private investments so 100% of donations goes toward the water projects themselves.

Water Projects

charity: water's water projects have reached 17 countries, and 1.7 million people since it began in 2006.

The organization has funded about 500 water projects in Ethiopia alone. The water projects include hand-dug and drilled wells, spring protections, biosand filters, tap stands, and rain water catchments. Something that makes **charity: water** special is their connection to the countries they serve. People are served not only by these water projects but by rehabilitations.

Sustainability is important to the organization, so **charity: water** has made sure to partner with local water organizations and create committees within the communities to build and maintain various water projects, build a sense of community, and provide the citizens with a sense of ownership. **charity: water** works with a water group in each of the countries they've assisted. They also rehabilitate previously abandoned water projects so the communities can have clean and safe drinking water again.

So, **charity: water** isn't only improving health, they are teaching people who may have lost faith in themselves to take leadership roles. The organization's efforts help empower women, support education, and promote collaboration.

Media

Something that's really spectacular about **charity: water** is the way they operate their website and social media. I watched a video of a talk Scott Harrison gave, and part of his personal mission in making **charity: water** stand out from the crowd was to [quote] "not suck at design" [unquote]. I think his former work in public relations ultimately helped him realize what engages people -- what's visually appealing and engaging to the mind. The **charity: water** website is chockfull of interesting information: high quality emotional photographs, blog entries about charity: water t-shirt sightings and various events the organization puts on, links to the employees' twitter accounts, videos, and an interactive Google Map plug-in that shows where every single one of the organizations 3,811 water projects is located.

Conclusion

These people that **charity: water** have helped are very real...

“...and they need our help. They didn’t choose to be born into a village where the only source of water is a polluted swamp. And we didn’t choose to be born in a country where even the homeless have access to clean water and a toilet. We invite you to put yourself in their shoes. Follow them on their daily journey. Carry 80 pounds of water in yellow fuel cans. Dig with their children in sand for water. Line up at a well and wait 8 hours for a turn. Now, make a decision to help. We’re not offering grand solutions and billion dollar schemes, but instead, simple things that work. Things like freshwater wells, rainwater catchments and sand filters. For about \$20 a person, we know how to help millions. Start by helping one” ([Mission](#), 2011).

Supplemental Resources

Highlights from charity: water's 2009 annual report

Available for download at the organization's website: [Financials, 2011](#)

In 2009:

- Projects: 1058 in 2009 (2321 total)
- Countries served: 16 (Cote d'Ivoire, Honduras, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya)
- People served: 1,048,309 total
- Types of projects: water projects (schools, villages, clinics) & sanitation facilities
- Types of technologies: hand-dug wells, drilled wells, rehabilitations, spring protections, biosand filters, tap stands, rain water catchments

Since the 2009 annual report

- Projects: 1490 in 2010 alone (3811 total, from 2006-present)
- Countries Served: 17 (all 16 of the countries listed above, plus Nepal)
- People served: 694,022 in 2010 alone (1,742,331 total, from 2006-present)

Check out [charity: water's media section](#), where you can:

- See every video the organization has ever made
- Read the charity: water blog
- See all the press that's been given to the organization
- Spread the word by downloading banners for your social media sites
- Request a speaker
- Find charity: water on twitter
- Download charity: water posters, videos, and more!

References

charity: water. (2009). *charity: water annual report 2009*. Retrieved from http://www.charitywater.org/about/cw_09_annual_report.pdf.zip

charity: water. (2011). *Financials*. Retrieved from <http://www.charitywater.org/about/financials.php>

charity: water. (2011). *Founder's story*. Retrieved from http://www.charitywater.org/about/scotts_story.php

charity: water. (2011). *Mission*. Retrieved from <http://www.charitywater.org/about/mission.php>

charity: water. (2011). *Why water*. Retrieved from <http://www.charitywater.org/whywater/>