

# WATER FOR LIFE

Throughout history, every culture has developed ways of finding and protecting water. People have used divining rods, invented devices for lifting and transporting water, planted trees to attract rain, and made laws to encourage neighbouring tribes and villages to share water, prevent conflicts, and preserve this precious resource for future generations.



Most people already know what their water problems are. A woman who carries water long distances every day does not need to be told that carrying water is hard work. But she may not feel that she has the power to make her work easier.

To improve access to enough safe water, it is important for people to understand how to conserve, protect, store and treat water. Action Sheets 13 – 28 introduce practical water security measures that people are taking in different parts of Africa.

But understanding how to manage water is not enough. The community must be motivated to change what does not work and to make these changes sustainable through community organization and action. A community water program can create a shared understanding among a group of people. If people can see water security as a community problem, they can also see that they may have the power together to make change. This is called “raising community awareness.” Action Sheets 10 and 11 provide information and activities to help with this vital step. Action Sheet 12: “Developing a plan for community water security” describes ways to organize for change.

The solutions offered here can be applied to small water systems anywhere. As long as all people have a say in how water is collected, conserved, and used, solutions can be found for even the most difficult problem.

One of the main threats to water quality in Africa is out-of-control invasive aquatic plants such as the water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*). The water hyacinth has seriously affected most water bodies in the region, including Lake Victoria, the Nile River and Lake Chivero. Action Sheet 29 describes efforts to counter this threat.

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