



## GOAL 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITARY PROVISION

'The smaller the lizard, the greater the hope of it becoming a crocodile'  
[proverb from Ethiopia]

### One day spent with Ayana from Ethiopia

Selam! Ibalalew Ayana. I am 13 years old and I live in Bursa, a little village in the North of Ethiopia. I like living here very much. The landscape is beautiful and our village has a great school. But there is a big problem – there is a lack of water. I have heard that people in other countries can just drink cool water coming from a water tap. That sounds like paradise to me and the people from my village.

I used to get tummy aches and eye infections very frequently and my eyesight became weaker and weaker. For quite a while we had no idea where these infections came from. Luckily we found out the cause; it came from the polluted water from the waterhole we had made for ourselves. My infected eyes made it difficult for me to read what the teacher was writing on the blackboard at school and reading the school books was almost impossible. A doctor told us that my disease is called 'Trachoma' and is caused by using dirty water to wash your face and hands. Every time you have an eye infection it leaves scars on the corner of your eye that hurt and need to be operated. If you leave it too long without having an operation you can go blind.

Come with me, I will show you were my mum and I fetch fresh water every two days! I hope you had a big breakfast because it is quite a trip. When I

was little, I used to hold on to my mum's arm so that I would not trip over the many stones. By now I have been so many times that I know my way by heart. It takes about one hour to get to the well and I know every stone and beetle that crosses my way. It takes me 11,570 footsteps to get there and 14,300 to get back. On my way back I need to be careful not to spill any water. Usually the water is very clean but sometimes families wash their clothes with it and make it dirty. Mum says today we are lucky, the water is crystal clear. The long walk was definitely worth it!

Do you want to know how I carry the heavy water back to the village? The canisters are too heavy to be carried just with my hands so I carry them on my head! Since my head is round and not flat at the top, I take a cloth, scarf or palm leaf and lay it on my head. You fold it so that it forms a ring and then wear it like a hat. It also serves as a cushion between the weight and my head. How much water do you think I can carry like this? 25 litres weigh 25 kilos. Ever since I have the clean water to drink and wash myself I hardly ever get sick and I have a lot more energy for school. I also watch that my siblings wash their hands after they have been to the toilet.

I was taught the most important hygiene rules at school. I love learning. In my spare time I try to learn as much as possible. I also really like my teacher. He gave me the contact to the medical centre that now gives out medication to all the people in my village so that we don't get any more eye infections. In one month I will have my operation so that the scars on my eye won't get worse and I won't be in pain any more. When I grow up I would also love to become a doctor to help people in villages like mine.

I dream of our own well in our village with clean water and who knows, maybe one day we can even have a water pipeline.





## Clean water and sanitary facilities — Clean water for all, free access to high quality drinking water

Up to 60 percent of the human body consists of water. The body of a small child holds up to 75 percent. Isn't that incredible? We should all drink a minimum of 2 litres of water every day. We also use water to wash our dishes or to shower or take a bath. In total every person uses around 50 litres of water every day to live a normal good life. However, many people in poorer countries, such as Ethiopia have to live with far less water – in fact they have to get by with just 20 litres of water per day. That is about the amount of water we use showering in just 1 and a half minutes. Flushing the toilet alone takes up to 10 litres of water. We have to remember that we would not be able to grow fruits and vegetables without water and we also need it for animals and the production of clothes, shoes and furniture.

Goal 6's main focus is that every person will have access to clean and affordable water as well as good sanitary facilities by 2030. A toilet in your home seems like a matter of course but for some people it is a luxury. You might think to yourself, 'What is the problem? There is enough water on this planet for everyone. Looking down from space the earth is really blue.'

Two thirds of the planet consists of water. Nevertheless, most of it is salt-water which we cannot drink. Only 2.5 percent of the whole water supply is freshwater. It is not very easy to get to since two-thirds of freshwater is ice from the poles and glaciers. Therefore to be able to drink, cook, shower and wash up we need to get by with the one third of the freshwater supply available. What we know for certain is that all water-related cycles such as rivers, lakes, forests, mountains and wetland areas are essential to human life and need to be protected and restored.

Here in Austria we are lucky, we have many mountains, lakes, rivers and forests and we have plenty of drinking water. Nevertheless, we need to think about our future and should not use it too lavishly. Goal 6 also includes the idea that dirty water should be cleaned and recycled.

## What can we to help reach this goal?

- Day by day we use drinking water without really thinking about it but without much effort you can try to save a lot of water. Take a shower instead of a bath for example: Taking a bath takes up to 60 litres of water. Using the shower would only need half of that amount.
- How about trying to eat a little less meat? The consumption of meat has a big negative impact on our environment because the production of meat needs a lot more water since more arable land is required to feed the animals. For example, one kilogram of beef takes 15,000 litres of water, whereas only 100 litres of water are necessary to grow one kilo gram of grain, or one kilogram of potatoes if it is used directly for human use. Generally we can say that we need to think about what we buy and when we go shopping we should ask ourselves, 'Do I really need this?' For the production of clothing and other products a lot of water is also required.
- **Generation Blue** is a platform for young people in Austria which provides a lot of information about water. It also offers cool competitions, you can take part in. Just have a look: [www.generationblue.at](http://www.generationblue.at)

**Magdalena (8) from Lilienfeld, Lower Austria:**  
'When I brush my teeth, I turn off the water tap. That saves me at least two buckets of water.'

**Georg (13) from Hallein, Salzburg:** 'I put up a rain barrel outside in the garden. I use that water to water out plants.'

- The organisation **Licht für die Welt** supports people who have lost their eyesight due to polluted water. You could organise a charity event at your school to raise money for charity organisations such as them. You could also sign up for a school workshop at **Light for the world**. Check it out: [www.licht-fuer-die-welt.at/bildungsarbeit-oesterreich](http://www.licht-fuer-die-welt.at/bildungsarbeit-oesterreich)