



**Our
Life-Changing
Piped Water
Project
in Garashi,
Kenya**

**Things to celebrate during
Trees Are The Key
Awareness Week 2024**

Word Forest



**The severe drought in the
Horn of Africa from 2020 to 2023
has hindered access
to food, income and safe water
in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid
Lands.**

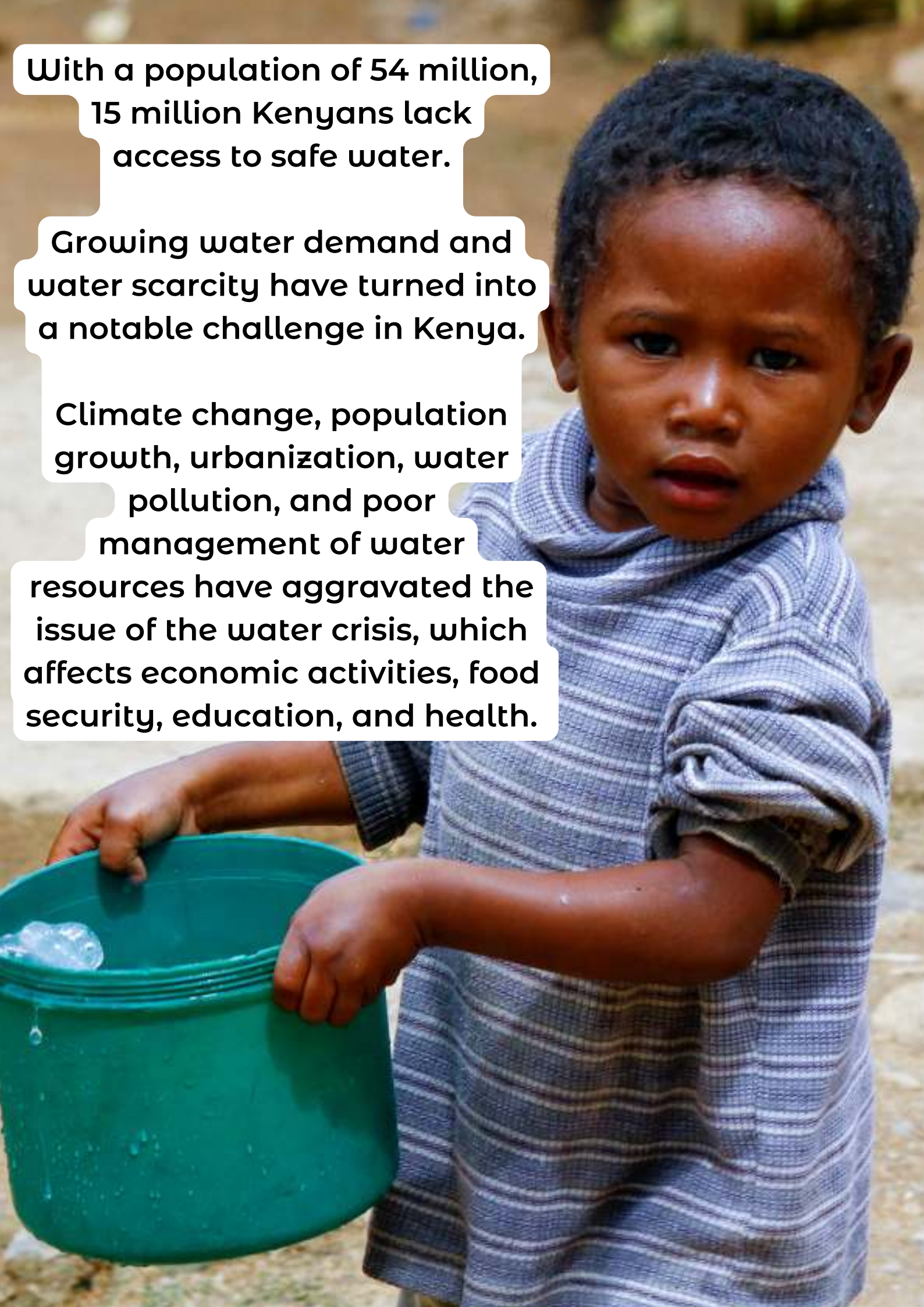
**Approximately 90% of open water
sources in Kenya had dried up by
March 2023.**

Report: Unicef 2024

With a population of 54 million, 15 million Kenyans lack access to safe water.

Growing water demand and water scarcity have turned into a notable challenge in Kenya.

Climate change, population growth, urbanization, water pollution, and poor management of water resources have aggravated the issue of the water crisis, which affects economic activities, food security, education, and health.





These challenges are especially evident in rural areas and urban slums where people are often unable to connect to piped water infrastructure.

Report: WaterOrg

Over the past few months, Word Forest has been fundraising to get piped water installed at our Head Office and Permaculture Teaching Centre (PTC) in Garashi, Kenya. We're thrilled to report that with a lot of help from our friends and partners, we've managed it. It's almost impossible to put into words how significant a boost this is to our planting capabilities and the wellbeing of our staff too.

Securing consistent access to clean sources of water remains a major issue in Kenya and indeed, across the whole of Africa. Problems from a hotter climate, reduced, unpunctual rainfall and drought, continue to exacerbate desertification and laden our mission to reforest Kenya, with additional challenges.





A lack of water to drink and/or water plants with, presents our Kenyan colleagues with unwanted complexities to a) ensure the people who dig the holes and plant the saplings feel well and are suitably hydrated, and b) water the delicate, thirsty saplings once they've been planted.

Each sapling requires regular watering during the first few months and their base also needs to be covered with a good mulch to conserve moisture, protect the stems from the harsh elements and give it some stability.

These critical procedures create optimum conditions for the saplings to put down vital tap roots, enabling them to grow to maturity. Every sapling that makes it through this early period goes on to help Kenyan biodiversity to flourish and it gives a boost to our native wildlife too.

There's no point planting a single tree in Kenya unless you do this. The volatile plants are particularly susceptible to dehydration and likely to die if uncared for. That renders even the best intended efforts, utterly futile.

The following is a wonderfully uplifting report from Charles Kidhuku, our Field Officer in Garashi. I hope it helps you realise the critical part that you and our supporters are playing by helping us reforest Kenya and take care of the phenomenal people who plant and care for the trees.





"The water project here at Garashi is almost complete and it is about to bring a new dawn to our entire community. As a result of your kindness and generosity, we were recently able to give employment to over 40 people in the local community.

They were engaged in many different ways from bush clearing, trench digging, laying of pipes and even backfilling the trenches. These trenches will soon carry water pipes full of fresh, clean, safe water and it will terminate at a tap here at our PTC.

People in our area are already enjoying some of the benefits in terms of the employment it brought, but this water project is so much more than that. Accessible safe water is about to become a dream come true for hundreds of marginalised people.

This is because up until now the only source of water we've had easy access to has been via unreliable water pans which were dug a long time ago. Water pans are also referred to as earth dams or rainwater harvesting structures. They are designed to capture and store rainwater from nearby catchment areas. However, the pan only collects surface runoff water and it is also used by domestic and wild animals which makes it unfit and unsafe for human consumption.





If people in rural communities like ours are lucky enough to live near a water source, they will also draw water from rivers whenever they can. In our area, when the long rains (March-April-May) and short rains (November and December) fail, as they have done many times over the last decade, people have to walk a minimum of one kilometre in order to get this essential commodity.

It's generally women and children who do this work. They carry water in 20 litre (20kg) containers on their heads, which can cause musculoskeletal problems in later life. Again, this is not clean, safe water to drink for a variety of reasons

During the dry season, around 30% of the 185 pupils at nearby Kakuhani Primary School regularly miss classes because they are required to go and search for water.

This has for many years been an ongoing problem and it has consistently lowered the education levels of the students who are already struggling because they have poor living standards at home. Those who fetch water after school risk encountering hippos and snakes; most of them walk barefoot.

Leaving the school premises to seek water - while students are supposed to be at school - has also contributed to many school dropouts, especially for girls. Unfortunately, once girls have dropped out, they become particularly vulnerable to early pregnancies and in some cases, they find themselves forced into child marriages. This situation is all too common when times are bad. While it does create short-term financial relief through dowries, these are not options that any truly loving parent wants to take.

As I am sure you now understand, planting and taking care of trees in this area has been a very big challenge for us because of that consistent lack of water. A person could plant like 50 trees in his or her compound during the rainy season but many of them would struggle to survive to the next season if the pans dried up.

Now we are just about to have great availability and access to life-giving water. I know that many more trees will be planted in the name of Word Forest and it will be much easier for us to take care of them, too.

As a result of our successful water project here at the PTC, an era that was constantly filled with worry is about to come to an end! We expect that once the project is fully complete in a couple of weeks time, we will all experience improvements in our general standards of health and well being. We know that cases of diarrhoea and constipation for example, often caused by drinking contaminated water, will reduce significantly and so will the demand to buy medicine to deal with it.

On behalf of my community, thank you and please feel blessed for the great things you have done supporting us.

Long live Word Forest. Viva Word Forest."

Thank you one and all. You are not only life creators, you are also life savers!

Charles Kidhuku: Kenya

Tracey West: UK



