

# Save the Rain

SAVE A RAINDROP. SAVE A LIFE.

## WOMEN, WATER AND THE WORLD

In the developed world, people do not have to carry the water we use on a daily basis. If we did, it's safe to assume we'd use a lot less than we do. The average American uses 100 to 176 gallons of water at home each day. The weight of that water is about 836 to 1400 pounds. Imagine if your family had to work together every day to transport over 800 pounds of water into your home!



For people living in many developing countries, distance from a clean water source is a critical factor. In particular, it affects the lives of women. Collecting water in developing countries is rarely a family activity. It is a task largely designated to women and young girls. Because women are also responsible for the care of young infants and children, girls begin carrying a small version of a water jug as early as 2 years old. In

some places in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, women can spend between 4 to 6 hours each day collecting water. In times of drought, it can sometimes take even longer. Access to clean water and good health are tightly linked, and the need to carry water very long distances limits the amount women can bring to their families. The dangers are not over even once water has been brought back home to the family. Water is often contaminated with microorganisms that cause diarrhea, typhoid, and cholera. These diseases are responsible for approximately 80 percent of all illnesses and deaths in the developing world, many of them children. Women and female children who have to travel to collect water pay a high cost. Less time is available for caring for children, preparing food, or pursuing income-generating activities. In some regions women and girls must travel through unsafe areas and are vulnerable to attack. Families, in many cases, must forgo sending their daughters to school, perpetuating the vicious cycle of illiteracy and poverty.

# Women Walking for Water Activity

Questions: Students will discuss facts relating to the difficulty and sociological implications of the unavailability of water. Review statistical information regarding average distances traveled for water. Form a hypothesis about the difficulty level of performing the task of carrying a gallon of water  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile.

Objective: Students will compare their own experiences with the availability of water to those in developing countries.

Lesson: Students will be asked to fill gallon containers with water and carry it with them throughout a portion of the day.

Materials: Students will bring in clean, empty plastic gallon jugs from home. The instructor will pre-determine the amount of time the students must carry their water around the school. Administration should be made aware of the activity in advance.

Post Activities: Students will discuss their experiences as a group. Are students better able to empathize with people living in water starved conditions after the activity? Why or why not? Were student's earlier predictions about difficulty level accurate? Review statistics regarding gallons needed and miles carried by people living in Africa

Optional Post-Activities: Have students try to lift two or three gallons of water at a time. (Be careful, because water weighs a lot!) Explain to students that many people in other parts of the world do not have access to running tap water or to wells. People (most often women) in other parts of the world carry as much as twelve gallons of water on their heads very long distances to meet the needs of their families.

Water Portfolio Entry: Women in many areas of the world must carry large amounts of water long distances to provide the basic needs of their families. What other tasks might these women be doing if they did not have to spend so many hours (sometimes as much as 20 hours per week) carrying water? What could you do with 20 extra hours per week?

Facilitate a discussion: What was our Water Walk meant to simulate? What words would you use to describe the Water Walk? Was it easier or more difficult than you expected? If you were walking to collect water in a country facing a water crisis, what other challenges might you face?