# Turning a trickle into a torrent

**Tuesday 11 May, 2021**

Hope Spring Water is a small UK-based charity with a clear mission.

Its team of volunteers working across West Africa has coordinated dozens of projects over the last six years, solving Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) challenges in some of the region's poorest communities.

Not only does the team facilitate the drilling of wells and boreholes, they also provide much needed education and training, helping to form water committees to ensure local people can manage their own access to clean water.

Each project is complex and time-consuming, requiring thousands of dollars in fundraising and months of logistical work. Every success story is fantastic for the local community, but it only solves the problem for a small number of people in a country where millions are living without clean water and basic sanitation.

In 2020, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF released their Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) report. It made sobering reading. More than 150 million Nigerians - that's three-quarters of the population - currently lack access to clean water in their homes.

"The JMP report was a big 'penny-drop moment' for us," says Temi Odurinde, one of Hope Spring's trustees. "It made us realise that we will never achieve our mission without doing something drastically different. We knew we needed to start investing at least some of our energies in large-scale efforts to change the narrative around water poverty, as well as continuing our work at a local level."

The report led to Hope Spring joining forces with End Water Poverty and many other international charities in the global #ClaimYourWaterRights initiative.

The Hope Spring team are currently driving a major project in Enugu state, Nigeria. It involves lobbying local authorities, advocating for better WASH policies, and mediating between government officials, utility companies and local communities.

"It might sound strange, but many people still don't realise that clean water is their fundamental human right protected by legislation," says Temple Oraeki, who is leading the project for Hope Spring. "It is the responsibility of the authorities to ensure things improve. They have a mandate to ensure basic WASH conditions are being met. Time and again the people have failed to hold their governments accountable while the authorities continue to fail in their mandate, and that is unacceptable."

It is estimated that just 1% of the population in the Enugu metropolitan area are connected to pipe-borne water in their homes. But, after advocacy meetings coordinated by Temple and a team of delegates from 13 other charities, some welcome progress is now being made.

In January 2021, the local government announced a state of emergency in the region. Crucially, they have recognised that there has been a severe decline in water and sanitation services, and have committed to rehabilitating the main water facility.

"By this summer, 60% of the Enugu metropolitan area will have access to clean water, if the state government keeps to their commitment," Temple says. "That is hundreds of thousands of people who might otherwise have continued to go without access to clean water. It has shown us the importance of dialogue, and trying to get everybody pulling in the same direction. We have seen that often the biggest obstacle to action is mutual mistrust and poor communication. By mediating between the authorities and local people, we have been able to make things happen fast."

This #ClaimYourWaterRights project has opened the eyes of the Hope Spring trustees and shown what is possible when charitable organisations pool their resources and fundraising efforts. With a little collaboration and a lot of hard work, millions of people will start to benefit.

"We will never lose sight of the local projects our volunteers are so passionate about," Temi says. "When our amazing team on the ground in Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone digs a borehole, they are creating an instant impact in that local community. But, if we can combine that strategy with a number of larger-scale projects like the one in Enugu, we can bring clean water to so many more people. That is

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a very exciting thought.”

To support Hope Spring, or to find out more about the project in Enugu, visit: https://www.hopespring.org.uk/claim-your-water-rights/ or Hope Spring Facebook page.

**More About Hope Spring**

Hope Spring aims to assist people and communities in poor, often remote areas in Africa to identify, develop and establish a sustainable source of clean water. It aims to alleviate poverty, as well as sanitation and hygiene challenges associated with lack of access to clean water. To achieve our aims, we are committed to the following strategic objectives:

- Assisting communities to identify the most ideal source of clean water in or around their community
- Funding or building a well or a borehole, where that is the most sustainable way to meet a community’s water challenge
- Educating and providing information, and training developing communities in the importance of basic sanitation and hygiene
- Emphasising the importance of educating children, the future leaders of their community
- Working with other WASH NGOs and donor organisations to implement water related development projects
- Undertaking school and community outreach projects to promote the importance of clean water and water conservation

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