ISAWWA Member Trekking for Water in Tanzania, You Can Help!

By Brianna Huber

There is nothing quite like the smell of fresh mountain air. The tranquility of being surrounded by nothing but nature. The pure euphoria of reaching the top of the mountain and looking out over the world.

This August I will embark on the adventure (and sheer test of will) of a lifetime to raise money for water and sanitation projects in Tanzania. I have always loved hiking, but I certainly have never done anything this extreme. I will climb the tallest free-standing mountain in the world, also the tallest mountain in Africa. I will pass through five distinct climate zones, ranging from rainforest to alpine desert to glacial artic to reach Kilimanjaro’s Uhuru Peak, standing 19,340 feet high. Following the Lemosho route to the top will take eight days. Yes, EIGHT days with no shower, using the restroom in the bush, strange food, consuming less than what we as water professionals would consider adequately disinfected water, sleeping on a small air-filled pad on the ground, and likely racking up quite the collection of blisters on my feet. Hiking temperatures may range from -20 to 90 degrees, and it is highly likely that I will be hiking in both rain and snow. Dehydration, diarrhea, frostbite, injury, and altitude sickness are all common. The oxygen level at the top is about fifty percent that at sea level, which is like functioning with one lung. And yes, people die trying to summit this mountain every year.

I describe these conditions, not to make you think I have lost my mind, but so that you understand how important this is to me. As a water professional, I cannot think of anything more important than global water sustainability and ensuring there is ample clean water and sanitation services available to every person on this planet. In recent years I have become increasingly interested in these topics, and as I learn more and more, I am increasingly saddened with where we are at in addressing these issues globally. I knew I had to do something BIG to help, and I figure if Tanzanians can face the daily physical, emotional and mental struggles they do due to lack of clean water and sanitation services, certainly I can do this for eight days!

As water professionals, I’m sure you have read a few statistics here and there about the number of people who do not have access to clean water and sanitation services, the number of people that die every year due to unsanitary water conditions, the number of children who have never attained even a grade school level education because they must instead fetch “water” for their family needs. I’m sure you have seen global water scarcity maps, know that water is the new oil and literal world wars over water are predicted to occur as early as 2030. So, I am not going to share those statistics here.

I do, however, want to share just three statistics specific to Tanzania that should strike a chord with you:

- Africa is the fastest growing continent, with more than half of global population growth by 2050 occurring in Africa.
- Only 50 percent of Tanzania’s 53 million people have access to an improved source of safe drinking water.
- Only 34% of Tanzania’s 53 million people have access to improved sanitation.
Please note, “improved” does not mean safe and adequate to our U.S. standards.

Further, most water in Tanzania is fetched by women and children, who walk several miles (on average 3.72-10) carrying water jugs weighing up to 40 pounds every day to reach the nearest (dirty) watering hole. These children therefore do not get to go to school, and these women do not get to go to work to earn money for their families, which further contributes to the chronic poverty found in Tanzania, as seventy percent of Tanzanians continue to live on less than $2.00/day.

I want to show our friends on the other side of the world that we care for their well-being and want to help. And I hope you will help me by donating to my fundraising effort!

A donation in any amount is greatly appreciated, but I have included some fun amounts, equal to various elevations that I will hit as I embark on this journey.

100% of donations will go to the water and sanitation projects implemented by the Tanzanian Gender Networking Programme (TGNP). I choose this non-profit organization for several reasons. First, I am extremely impressed with the work that they do across Tanzania. Second, representatives from UN Water suggested them, so I know they are valid and trustworthy with our donation. Third, they specifically support water projects designed, implemented and maintained by Tanzanian women, and as chair of the ISAWWA Women in Water Committee, I love seeing women in countries like this, where women traditionally do not work outside of the home, getting involved in water solutions. Finally, they allow locals to develop local solutions that work for them, and use locals to design, implement, and maintain the project, which supports their local economy.

Your donation will support:

• clean water and sanitation projects throughout Tanzania,
• local employment and local economies
• inclusion and diversity of women in water projects

To learn more about TGNP and make your donation, please visit https://www.isawwa.org/donations/. Donations may be made May 28th-August 9th, 2019.

We are so incredibly fortunate to not have to think about the water we consume and using the restroom. Let’s show Tanzanians just how much we want the same for them!

Thank you so very much to ISAWWA for supporting me in this effort!

And thank YOU for any support you can provide!

Feel free to email me at bhuber@eastmoline.com if you have any questions.