



## LIVING WATER TRIPS PHILOSOPHY

Living Water International is committed to helping end the global water crisis by mobilizing churches and communities through water access, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions to increase the spiritual, physical, and social wellbeing of the most vulnerable in communities around the world. It does this through a strong commitment to its strategic plan, while upholding its mission and core values of honoring God, developing people, pursuing excellence and being good stewards in every aspect of their work. These values are interwoven into all of the Living Water's programs, including the Living Water Trips (LWT) program. The design of the program is to advance the strategy of Living Water by focusing on two main objectives.

First, Living Water seeks to mobilize people to do their part in ending the global water crisis. With 771 million people living without access to basic water service, Living Water must do more to motivate LWT volunteers to be advocates for the thirsty. One of the best and most impactful ways to do this is through a well-managed cross-cultural experience. Educating and equipping the LWT volunteers before, during and after the trip will hopefully encourage them to proactively seek ways to tell others about those who still lack safe, clean water. The trip experience is a great discipleship tool where participants get a first-hand experience of integral mission (the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel). As they see and experience this in a different cultural context, they will hopefully be inspired with ideas and motivation to practice integral mission in their own community.

Second, Living Water desires to see communities have access to improved water services and improved hygiene and sanitation practices. It is Living Water's intent for trip participants to come alongside of the ongoing work of the in-country staff and community members in a culturally appropriate way in order to support the development process by helping with water point construction, participating in hygiene promotion, and mobilizing churches and communities. The hope is that the church and community members see the participants as co-laborers rather than donors or "providers" of a project. LWT teams are intentionally kept small to encourage relational connections and reduce disruption in the community. In no way should participants be the "leaders" of the project or seen as the benefactors for the community. In every step or interaction with the community (before the volunteers arrive and after they depart), the Living Water local staff take the lead. They understand best the culture and specific community nuances. They work with local government officials, community based organizations, churches, and community leaders throughout the process.



The results of LWT volunteers participating in a trip should be:

- Increased understanding and application of integral mission in their lives and churches
- Increased connection to the global church and the work God is doing in communities around the world
- Increased advocacy and giving to Living Water to support Living Water's ongoing work

Living Water believes this can be accomplished through providing a God-centered experience and empowering the participants through education.

## God-Centered Experience

Living Water believes the church is vital to ensuring sustainable WASH services. Churches are long-term grassroots organizations with deep local knowledge. They are often respected in their communities, have influence, build solidarity and trust, and are motivated to volunteer. Because of this, local churches can address values, attitudes, social norms, and spiritual needs far better than outsiders from international organizations or government agencies can.<sup>1</sup> The Living Water staff is working towards cultivating relationships with the local pastors and churches to share the vision for integral mission and equip them for greater kingdom impact within their communities. Strengthening the church's relationship with the communities and empowering the church to be a pro-active entity within the community increases the likelihood of improved WASH practices within households while also ensuring the increased WASH services are sustainable.

During the LWT week, the words and actions of Living Water staff and trip participants reflect their commitment to sharing God's word and their outward manifestation of God's love for others. Trip participants work alongside the community churches and Living Water staff in proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel through WASH activities. The local pastor is both part of the process from start to finish and a key part of the dedication service as he or she brings a message illustrating the importance of not just safe water, but the *living water* of Jesus Christ.

## Education

Living Water believes that if trips are done appropriately with well-designed pre-, during-, and post-trip education, the learnings can be cultivated and utilized for further action. During the weeks and months leading up to their trips, the LWT participants begin to learn about the water crisis, the country they will serve, and what to expect during their trip through materials and other resources provided by the LWT program. To cultivate a healthy development mindset for LWT participants, Living Water has established 5 statements<sup>2</sup> to prepare hearts and minds for the trip experience:

1. Poverty is a Shared Experience
2. Dignity for All

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<sup>1</sup> <https://livingwater.box.com/v/theoryofchange2>

<sup>2</sup> <https://livingwater.box.com/v/healthydevelopmentmindsets>



4. Attitude is Everything
5. The Trip is just the Beginning

Once the LWT participants enter the community, they work alongside the in-country staff. The Living Water staff has been trained in Living Water quality standards, cross-cultural experiences, relational issues, program delivery and logistics, and risk management in order to provide the trip participants with the best experience. Throughout the week, the staff has opportunities to educate the LWT participants on the global water crisis and Living Water's response to it. Team members will meet daily for devotions and a time to reflect on and process their experience. Near the end of the week, the participants have the opportunity to brainstorm about what they can do to support Living Water and how they can mobilize church members and others to help end the water crisis once they return home.

As trip participants see and understand the needs and opportunities in the community and share God's love with others through a cross-cultural experience, they experience a paradigm shift upon returning home. They now are empowered to advocate for the thirsty on a more personal level because of their experience. This shift from awareness to advocacy is a key component in continuing the journey with Living Water and contributing to ending the water crisis. Living Water will encourage trip alumni to continue to deepen their engagement with its ministry through a variety of opportunities such as contributing to the Every Drop monthly giving program, creating a personal fundraiser, or inviting Living Water to share at their church.

The design of the Living Water Trips program is to provide a transformative experience for the LWT participants so they ultimately become lifelong advocates for the thirsty on a personal and global level and apply concepts of integral mission in their lives and churches. Through sharing experiences, opening hearts to God's love and envisioning what the future can look like with access to clean water, lives can be transformed.