



A Life of Service: Water.org

Gary White, Water.org
Kansas City, Missouri

☀ Call to Action

To get involved with Gary and Matt's work helping communities gain access to clean water and sanitation, please visit water.org.

☀ Values

- Thoughtfulness
- Empathy
- Innovation
- Entrepreneurship
- Partnership

☀ Lessons Learned

Let the people you admire inspire you to lead a life of service.

The things you take for granted could be seen as a treasure to someone else.

Be grateful for what you have, and willing to help those who need it.

Communication with like-minded people is the first step toward fruitful partnerships. If you're looking for the solution to a problem, talking to others in that same field might be exactly what you need.

It is possible to be both an entrepreneur and a humanitarian, and to excel at both.

Gary White was raised for a life of service. "My parents, teachers, and faith really instilled in me a passion for it," he says.

When he was in college he found his calling: to study civil and environmental engineering. That was when he discovered the intersection of his greatest passion and the world's greatest needs. "Engineering answers to the world's problems would be the path that I would take from there on," he says. In 2008, he met Matt Damon at the Clinton Global Initiative. At the time, Gary was running an organization called Water Partners, which helped people living in poverty get access to microloans for clean water and sanitation, and Matt was running an organization called H2O Africa, which was helping to supply people with drinking water in rural Africa. "After talking a while, Matt realized that we had a track record of doing what he was trying to do, and he had the name and brand, and access to new and greater levels of funding that could change the future of water," Gary says. He and Matt merged their organizations to form Water.org. To date, in partnership with its 154 partners around the world, Water.org has mobilized over \$2.6 billion in capital to support safe water and sanitation projects around the world.

☀ Language Arts

What is the link between climate change and water scarcity? How does water scarcity affect a community? How does climate change affect flooding? How does flooding affect a community's access to water? What can be done to guarantee that people have access to safe drinking water? Based on your answers, conduct a Round Table discussion with your peers and come up with a list of specific actions your class will take to help tackle this issue, at a global, and at a local scale.

After watching Gary's and Matt's [interview with Trevor](#)

Noah¹, write an explanatory essay in which you write about the impact water scarcity has on a country's economic development, the education of its children--especially for young girls--and the quality of life of women in those countries. What is the biggest hurdle for people in regard to gaining access to safe, clean water in countries that suffer from water scarcity? What is Gary's and Matt's organization doing to help fix the problem?

In the [interview with Trevor Noah²](#), Matt Damon says "It is expensive to be poor." What does he mean by this? Did this fact surprise you? What specific examples does he use to explain this concept? How is water.org helping these people? Record your answers in a short video (no longer than four minutes).

After reading Gary's story, break up into groups of 2-4 people. Your teacher will assign your group one of the following questions to answer: What is the first responsibility society needs to undertake in order to deal with water scarcity, its causes, and its consequences? How can young people rise up to meet the challenges created by climate change and water scarcity? Using the answer you came up with, create a poster which you will then use for a [Gallery Walk³](#) like the one described in the video. As you complete this exercise, don't forget to ask questions and express your opinions in an informed and respectful manner.

STEM Activities

In this [lesson plan on microfinancing⁴](#), students will be introduced to the concepts and practice of microfinance, and will learn how the provision of unsecured loans to low-income, small-scale entrepreneurs in the developing world has improved the business prospects and quality of life for many desperately poor people around the world.

Research the water crisis conditions in a country of your choosing. Formulate a strategy on how to address the problem. Then pretend you are a national, state, or local leader, and present your idea on how to address the concerns about water quality to the class.

Using this [Water Remediation Lab⁵](#), measure the effectiveness of water filters in purifying contaminated water by graphing and analyzing test results.

Using this [activity from TeachEngineering.org⁶](#), teams practice water quality analysis through turbidity measurement and coliform bacteria counts. Then, they will use information about water treatment processes to design prototype small-scale water treatment systems and test the influent (incoming) and effluent (outgoing) water, to assess how well their prototypes are producing safe water that will prevent water-borne illnesses.

Sustainability Innovations

[Water.org⁷](#) has found success by transferring their model to 11 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Assess their work in two of these countries and compare their models them. How were they able to adapt the model to different challenges in each country?

Gary and Matt have been able to successfully collaborate to address water as one of Africa's major issues. Read this [article⁸](#) by the United Nations about the effects that microfinance can have in Africa. Review the section assessing operational efficiency, and discuss ways that this can translate to other sectors or organizations that are not related to water.

One of the main keys to Water.org's success was identifying the issues underlying the availability of water. In this [World Economic Forum Article⁹](#), the success of organizations that are working on adaptation to climate change is discussed. What

is participatory scenario planning? How has this process allowed organizations to find successful approaches for dealing with future climate conflicts?

Sustainability Career Pathways

Microfinance Industry. As Gary's innovative work reveals, [microfinance](#)¹⁰ is a proven tool in helping to create opportunities, and leveraging the resources of the poorest segment of humanity so they can help themselves,. There are many ways into this sector: for example, through finance, policy, or development, as this [article](#)¹¹ details. And databases like [UNJobs](#)¹² and [DevEx](#)¹³ will help you find internships and jobs in microfinance.

Water and Sanitation Engineers and Managers. Water and sanitation engineers help plan and build the water systems and piping needed to deliver fresh water to communities and take away sewage, while managers help to operate existing systems. Learn more about a [career as a water engineer here](#)¹⁴ and a career in [operating water plants here](#)¹⁵.

Sustainable Beer Industry. Making beer uses a lot of water (not to mention a lot of grain, and a lot of energy). But it can be, and is starting to be, produced more sustainably. Responsible brands can be leveraged to help invest in sustainable development, (as [Stella Artois has done with Water.org](#)¹⁶). With [2.1 million jobs supported by the U.S. beer industry](#)¹⁷, this is a sector filled with opportunities both for jobs and for making a real difference in the way it is made. [Read more about sustainable beer industry efforts here](#)¹⁸.

- 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sqeh-ycjiFU>
- 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sqeh-ycjiFU>
- 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSt5echeRrM>
- 4 <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/ascentofmoney/lessons/microfinance-and-entrepreneurship-lesson-overview/32/>
- 5 https://www.teachengineering.org/activities/view/wst_environmental_lesson02_activity2
- 6 https://www.teachengineering.org/activities/view/cub_waterqtnew_lesson01_activity1
- 7 <https://water.org/our-impact/where-we-work/>
- 8 <https://www.un.org/esa/africa/microfinancein africa.pdf>
- 9 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/02/climate-change-adaption-resilience-africa/>
- 10 <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/07/microfinance.asp>
- 11 <https://economics.virginia.edu/career/careers-microfinance>
- 12 <https://unjobs.org/>
- 13 <https://www.devex.com/>
- 14 <https://www.careerexplorer.com/careers/water-engineer/>
- 15 <https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/wastewater-treatment-operator>
- 16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOh3xWT7rsU>
- 17 <https://www.foodandwine.com/beer/beer-brewing-industry-jobs-statistics>
- 18 <https://daily.seventifty.com/how-beer-brewers-are-embracing-sustainability/>

