

CUMULATIVE REPORT

WaterSafe Program

2025



"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward." -Matthew 10:42

History

The WaterSafe backpack was born out of a real-world humanitarian crisis. Following the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti, David Fischer traveled to support relief efforts. During his time in affected communities, he observed people collecting and storing drinking water in reused, dirty jerrycans. Having worked in a chemical plant, David understood the serious dangers posed by chemical residue left inside such containers: chemicals that do not wash away easily and can contaminate water long after initial use.

This experience revealed a critical but often overlooked problem in global water interventions: even when safe water sources are available, unsafe storage and transport can reintroduce contamination. Motivated to address this gap, David dedicated himself to developing a safe, ergonomic, and hygienic water storage solution. After two years of research, testing, and refinement, the WaterSafe backpack was developed to ensure that once water is collected safely, it remains safe until consumption.

The Challenge of Unsafe Water

Diarrheal diseases remain a leading cause of illness and death in Kenya, with approximately 88% of these fatalities linked to unsafe water, poor sanitation, and inadequate hygiene. Commonly used jerrycans for water collection and storage often originate from chemical industries and are nearly impossible to clean effectively. Over time, these containers become breeding grounds for harmful pathogens, contributing to the spread of preventable waterborne diseases.



In Kenya, an estimated 43% of the population lacks access to clean water, and nearly 443 million school days are lost annually due to water-related illnesses. This represents not just missed classes, but lost opportunities, delayed futures, and communities struggling to break free from cycles of poverty. At the same time, the economic burden of treating waterborne diseases accounts for up to 70% of national health costs, underscoring the urgent need for preventive, sustainable solutions.

The WaterSafe Backpack Solution

Partners for Care addresses this challenge through the distribution of the award-winning WaterSafe backpack. Each backpack holds 20 litres of water and features a durable outer shell with a safe, cleanable inner lining. The design prevents recontamination of water and incorporates solar sanitization technology, making it easy to clean and maintain. Beyond storage, the WaterSafe backpack serves as a powerful educational tool, reinforcing safe water, hygiene, and sanitation practices in schools and communities.

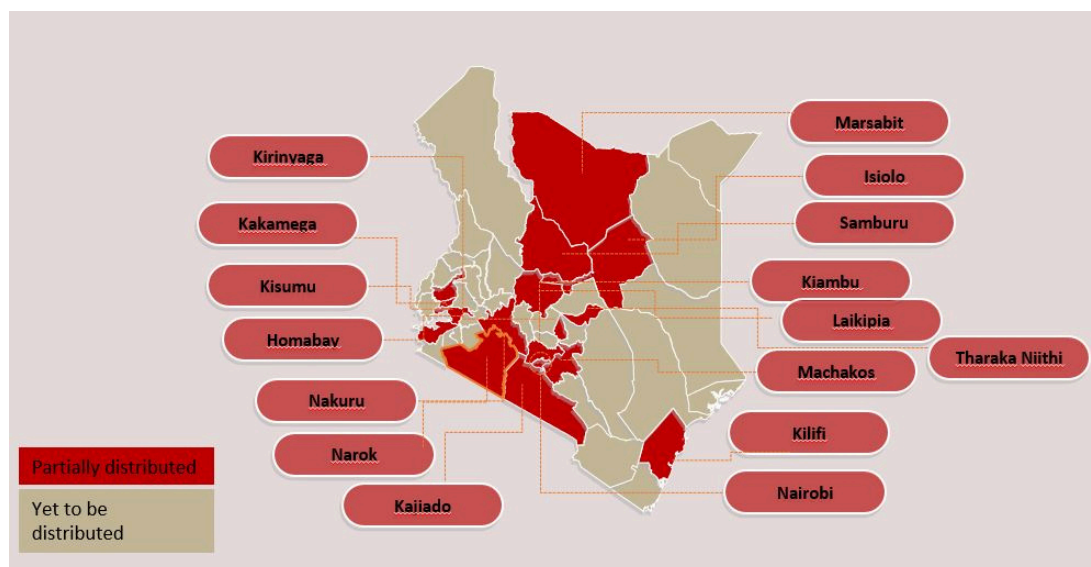


When adopted consistently at both household and school levels, the WaterSafe backpack has been shown to reduce rates of waterborne disease and improve overall quality of life in water-stressed communities.

Impact and Program Reach

Partners for Care (PFC) has distributed **73,136** WaterSafe backpacks across 16 counties in Kenya, as well as in Uganda and South Africa. To date, **1,544** out of 43,645 primary and secondary schools in Kenya have received WaterSafe backpacks, benefiting over **1,000,000** school-going children. Each WaterSafe backpack serves approximately 30 school-going children for up to five years.

Through these efforts, Partners for Care has positively impacted communities by reducing exposure to unsafe drinking water and supporting healthier learning environments.



Map of WaterSafe Backpack Distribution in Kenya

Evidence and Research Findings

Multiple studies conducted in collaboration with institutions such as Mount Kenya University confirm the effectiveness, acceptability, and sustained use of the WaterSafe backpack.

1. Quality of Water and Recovery Time of Malnourished Children (Parkishon, Marsabit County): This study demonstrated that access to safely stored drinking water significantly improved recovery times for malnourished children enrolled in nutritional feeding programs.

2. An Evaluation of Water Backpack Utilization in Kenya: Findings showed high levels of correct and consistent use of the WaterSafe backpack over time, with measurable reductions in waterborne illnesses.

3. Behavior Change Study on the Acceptability of PackH2O in Embu County: The study confirmed strong community acceptance, correct usage practices, and sustained behavior change related to safe water storage.

4. Alleviating Waterborne Prevalence for a Sustainable Learning Environment in Basic Learning Institutions in Kenya: This study underscores the need to scale the WaterSafe Program to more schools, demonstrating its effectiveness in reducing waterborne diseases and improving child health and learning outcomes nationwide.

Beneficiaries



One of the first beneficiaries of the WaterSafe in Marsabit



First WaterSafe backpack to be placed on a beneficiary in Marsabit County



The initial distribution of WaterSafe backpacks in Marsabit County, Kenya

Beneficiaries

Amina's Story: Learning Without Worry

“Having safe drinking water at school has changed my daily life. I no longer worry about getting sick or leaving class to search for water. I feel stronger, stay in school the whole day, and can pay attention to my lessons. Safe water has helped me do better in school as I am more productive and I now believe in a brighter future.”

~Amina, student Bright Kids Learning Centre



Safe Water, Healthier Classrooms

At Partners for Care, we are committed to ensuring every child in Kenya has access to safe drinking water. At Star Shine Juniors Academy within Bethel Primary School in Kilifi County, 340 eager pupils come to school each day ready to learn, but access to safe drinking water was constantly a challenge.

Through training and the use of the WaterSafe backpack, PFC is helping reduce school absenteeism and protect children from waterborne diseases. As one student, Chao, shared, “Before we had safe water, I would feel sick and miss school. Now I can drink safe water, stay in class, and learn without worry.”



Impact Through Partnership: Lions Club of Ruiru Pioneer

PFC partnered with the Lions Club of Ruiru Pioneer to distribute 50 WaterSafe backpacks to schools, expanding access to safe drinking water and improving health outcomes for learners.

“Before WaterSafe, many of us got sick after drinking water at school. Now the water is safe, and I don't miss classes anymore. I feel healthier and can concentrate better in class. ❤️”

— Student, Beneficiary Primary School



Water in the Desert: Hope Returns to Marsabit County

Amid the ongoing water crisis in Marsabit County, PFC continues to support vulnerable communities in Muthee Village and Parkishon Village.

Two 10,000-liter water tanks were installed and are now operational, complete with protective shelters and rainwater harvesting gutters. Their close proximity to homes has greatly reduced the distance mothers travel to collect water, bringing immediate relief to families.

More than 150 households received WaterSafe backpacks, giving families access to safe drinking water for the first time in many cases. This intervention is contributing to healthier lives and restoring dignity.

“We thank Partners for Care from the bottom of our hearts,” said Fatuma. “This support has given our community hope and helped us survive this difficult time.”



Looking Ahead

Every child in Kenya deserves access to safe, clean water. To achieve this, **789,957 WaterSafe** backpacks are needed to equip all schools nationwide, positively impacting over **23.6 million children**.

PFC is committed to ensuring that every classroom in Kenya has access to safe drinking water. By scaling the WaterSafe Program nationwide, we aim to eliminate preventable waterborne diseases, improve child health, and strengthen educational outcomes for millions of learners.

Our **2026** goal is to provide WaterSafe backpacks to every Early Childhood Development (ECD) center across four counties in Kenya, ensuring young children have reliable access to safe drinking water and a healthier start to learning. We are currently partnering with the County Government of Tharaka Nithi to advance this initiative, laying a strong foundation for scalable, county-wide impact.

We are grateful to all partners and donors for their unwavering support. Through your contributions, countless children will continue to thrive in school, stay healthy, and build brighter futures.

Our vision is a future where **safe water is not a privilege, but a guaranteed right for every child**. Together, we are one step closer to making safe water a reality for every child in Kenya.