

# WATER FOR KITHIMA

## *A Story of Distance, Determination, and Rotary*

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The Kithima Borehole Project • Rotary Club of Bayswater • District 9815

### The Walk

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Before dawn breaks over Kithima, the paths are already busy. Women and children move in quiet lines through the dust, empty jerry cans balanced on their heads or strapped to bicycles. Some will walk for two hours before they reach water. Some will walk for four. By the time they return home, half the day is already gone — and the water they carry is often the same water shared by cattle, drawn from rivers and open wells that offer no guarantee of safety.

This is not a story about scarcity in the abstract. It is a story about a girl who misses school because the walk to water takes longer than the walk to class. It is a story about a mother who chooses, every single day, between fetching water and tending her small farm. It is a story about a community that has learned to measure its life not in hours, but in litres carried.

### The Turning Point

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Word of Kithima's need travelled far — eventually reaching the Rotary Club of Bayswater in Melbourne, Australia, a community more than 13,000 kilometres away but bound by Rotary's simple, stubborn belief: that clean water is not a privilege, it is a foundation. Everything else — health, education, opportunity — is built on top of it.

The idea took shape gradually, the way the best community projects do. Spreadsheets were built to track funding sources. Appeal letters went out, asking supporters to see themselves in a village they would likely never visit. Progress towers were drawn, climbing bar by bar as donations arrived. Even before a single piece of equipment reached Kenya, the project had already brought two communities together — one giving what it could, the other waiting with the kind of patience that only necessity teaches.

### Breaking Ground

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Picture the day the drilling rig arrives in Kithima. It's loud, mechanical, entirely unlike anything the village has seen — a stark contrast to the quiet rhythm of the walking paths. Children gather at a respectful distance, watching. Elders stand with arms crossed, cautiously hopeful; they've heard promises before.

The drill bites into the earth. Metre by metre, it pushes past dry topsoil, past rock, past the disappointments of previous dry seasons — until, finally, water. Not a trickle. Not a rumour. Water, real and rising, drawn from deep below where the surface world's droughts cannot reach it.

Alongside the borehole rises something just as vital: a solar-powered kiosk, built to pump and distribute the water without the recurring cost and fragility of fuel or unreliable grid power. It is a small structure, but it represents something enormous — a solution designed not just to work today, but to keep working for years, seasons, generations.

## What Changes

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The walk shortens first. Then the school attendance climbs, quietly, as girls who once spent mornings hauling water instead spend them in classrooms. Waterborne illness — the kind that used to spread through shared, untreated sources — begins to recede. Small farms, no longer dependent on rainfall's mood swings, start to yield a little more, a little more reliably.

None of this happens instantly, and none of it happens without ongoing care — which is why the project was never just about the drilling. It was about a community, a solar kiosk, and a system built to last, backed by a partnership that intended to stay involved rather than simply hand over a title and depart.

## Why It Matters

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The Rotary Club of Bayswater didn't set out to build a monument. They set out to solve a single, solvable problem — one borehole, one village, one measurable improvement in the daily texture of people's lives. It's a story with no dramatic rescue, no single hero. Just patient fundraising, careful planning, an engineering solution suited to the land, and a community on the other side of the world willing to trust that the problem was real and worth solving.

That is, in many ways, the truest kind of Rotary story: unglamorous in its process, transformative in its outcome. A borehole doesn't make headlines. But for a girl in Kithima walking to school instead of to a well, for a mother with an extra hour to tend her crops, for an elder who watched water rise from the ground and allowed himself, at last, to believe — it changes everything.

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*The Kithima Borehole Project, supported by the Rotary Club of Bayswater, reflects Rotary's global commitment to sustainable water access — proof that a community half a world away can still show up, dig in, and make a lasting difference.*