



Walking for Water — Guide for Support Centres



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Foreword

Walking for Water is a fundraising and awareness-raising concept where school children aged 10-13 walk 6 kilometres, carrying 6 litres of water in a backpack. That's just under 4 miles, and is the average distance that women and girls in developing countries must walk every day, typically carrying 20 litres of water.

Funds are raised by the school children themselves, mainly as donations from friends and family. It's a perfect community initiative to build excitement and engage our youngest generation to help tackle the global water crisis.

The money is used to finance water projects in developing countries, which the kids can then follow through their schoolwork and online. As a preparation for the walk, guest lecturers educate the children about the importance of clean water and adequate sanitation in developing countries. Our March 2009 series of walks raised one million Euro for international water development projects, with low organizational costs.

Walking for Water launched eight years ago, and we've outperformed expectations each year since. From just a few hundred children walking at the first event, 2009 saw 18,000 children from 380 schools walk for water. In 2010, 30,000 children from 640 Dutch schools are expected to participate.

Aqua for All has now opened up Walking for Water, as a concept that can be replicated and improved upon by any organisation around the world that wants to host a Walking for Water event. Groups such as NGOs, municipalities, churches or Rotary Clubs can function as a 'Support Centre', and organise events for one or more schools. Just as exciting, the money raised can now be used to fund live projects through our internet partner Akvo.org, with the children following project updates online, direct from the communities they are helping to transform.

I hope you see the simplicity and power of Walking for Water, and myself and my team look forward to working with all of you as we bring the global water crisis to life amongst children, their families and their friends.

Sjef Ernes, director of Aqua for All.



Introduction

Walking for Water is an annual sponsor event which takes place around World Water Day (22 March). Primary school children aged between 10 and 13 walk 6 kilometres with 6 litres of water on their back, as many children in the developing world do on a daily basis. The money raised goes to water projects in developing countries. The walk is also used for educational purposes: drinking water and sanitation are given extra attention in class – including the project to be sponsored – both by the teaching staff and guest speakers.

All participating schools will need the help of a support centre (in certain cases, this service can be provided by the school itself).

What is a support centre?

A support centre is a local or regional organisation that recruits one or more schools to take part in Walking for Water, and coordinates the event locally or regionally. The support centres can be formed in many ways. For example:

- **One or more schools** take the initiative to participate in Walking for Water. They organise everything themselves. They choose their own project or select a project listed on Akvo.org. The school will be its own support centre.
- A **Rotary Club** wants to become involved with funding water projects. They recruit schools in the area and select a project that suits the Rotary Club and the anticipated amount of sponsorship. In this case, the Rotary Club becomes the support centre.
- A **development organisation** wants to raise funds for one of their own projects. They encourage one or more schools in the region to participate in Walking for Water. The development organisation becomes the support centre. A large organisation can take the initiative to recruit a substantial number of schools, regionally or nationwide.

The following guidelines, ideas and tips may not be applicable to all, but should be able to help you organise your Walking for Water event.

The five basic principles of Walking for Water

Who?

Walking for Water is a sponsored walk for primary school children aged between 10 and 13. The entire school can be involved in the educational aspects of drinking water and sanitation, but only the funds raised by the children from this age group are considered for donation purposes.

What?

The children walk 6 kilometres with 6 litres of water in a backpack - as many children in developing countries do every day. They ask their family, friends and neighbours to sponsor their walk.

When?

Walking for Water takes place every year in the week of World Water Day (22 March).

For what?

Each school has its own specific drinking water and/or sanitation project which has to fulfil the criteria: it must be aimed at the poorest of the poor in rural or peri-urban (unplanned urban) areas in the developing world.

Why?

Walking for Water has two goals: to raise awareness and funds. The walks aim to raise the children's awareness about the worldwide problems of drinking water and sanitation. To reach this goal, a Guest lesson has to be given, preferably by a water professional (a person who is working in an expert role related to water and / or sanitation). A manual is available for the Guest lesson.

First things first

Recruiting schools

Walking for Water is an event for primary school children aged between 11 and 13. The more children and schools take part, the more money will be raised. Schools often have a busy schedule and get many offers in the area of awareness raising and education. It is crucial to approach them at an early stage.

Tip

- Appoint a contact person at each school who liaises with the support centre and acts as a central point of reference for both the school and the support centre.

Projects

There are two options:

1. The support centre has its own project or has been requested by an organisation to organise a Walking for Water event for their project. The support centre could be an NGO or a private foundation.
2. The support centre does not have its own project but would like to make a financial contribution to water problems in the world by participating in Walking for Water. In this case, the support centre selects a project from those listed on Akvo.org (www.akvo.org)

Tip

- Find an organisation or (local) authority that can double the funds that are being raised by the children.

Register

Aqua for All and Akvo would like you to register your event, so we can keep track of all the Walking for Water initiatives. Please include information on which school is participating, for what project and the amount of funds raised by the children. You can register after the walk by sending an e-mail to walkingforwater@akvo.org.

Preparation

The walk

Doing a 6 km walk with 6 litres of water may sound simple enough... but it actually takes quite a lot of preparation.

Separately or jointly?

When several schools participate, there are a number of options:

- Each school's walk starts and ends at their own school
- Each school starts at their own school but finishes at a communal point
- The schools meet up first and jointly do the walk

The choice is yours and depends largely on the size of your event, the location of the schools and your organisational options.

The route

It is advisable to map out the route well beforehand. To make sure it measures 6 km, you could measure it on a map or cycle the route with a bicycle computer or GPS receiver. We also recommend you walk the route yourself to see what it feels like.

Tips

- Do not make the walk too hard (inclines, unpaved roads).
- We advise a circular route (the start will become the finish) and a nice break halfway, if possible offering a soft drink and/or snack. Make sure that there are volunteers to man these areas so that the children don't wander off unsupervised.
- Avoid traffic, busy crossings and major roads. If this is not feasible, make sure you have people directing the traffic. Where possible use walking paths, pavements and minor roads.
- Children will enjoy the walk more if you make it as varied as possible.
- Include an area with lots of people. The walk will get more local attention this way and people will be able to see what the children have to do for the money they collected. Successful areas to pass through have included: care homes, asylum seekers' centres, parks, shopping streets, government offices and buildings of the sponsors.
- If possible, visit a water-related point of interest along the way. Somebody from the water authorities or a parent could tell more about the item.
- Give the start and finish of the walk a purpose. The start is the place where water is handed out (water supply point – the "source"). The finish is where the water is collected or returned to nature (back to the pond, ditch, flower beds, trees, water barrel, etc). Make sure the start and finish are easily recognisable: school, water tower, pumping station, town hall, etc and make it a circular route if possible.
- Make a good map and description of the route so it is clear for everyone exactly where it is. If possible, mark the route with arrows or other signage.

Permits

The local authority will need to be notified of the event. The walks often require a permit, but sometimes all that is needed is to inform the authorities. Ask well in advance what is needed in your particular area.

Volunteers

Start early with recruiting volunteers – perhaps amongst the support centre staff or parents (in which case the schools will need to be involved).

Volunteers are vital for a trouble free walk:

- They will supervise the children during the walk. We recommend 1 volunteer for every 6 children. The volunteer helps to keep up the pace, can encourage slow walkers or might perhaps carry the backpack of tired children for a while.
- The volunteers man the start, finish and rest area. It is important to give the children extra attention during the halfway break and give them something to eat or drink if necessary.
- First aid: we strongly advise having at least one certified First-Aider on the walk. Chances are that one of the parents has a First Aid certificate.

Volunteers can also be used to recruit third party donations, for instance from local shops and other businesses, clubs and churches.

VIPs

VIPs often have a busy diary – approach them well in advance (ideally 4-6 months beforehand). They could be:

- the mayor or other officials
- local sporting heroes
- director of a water authority or sponsoring company
- other (locally, regionally or nationally) well-known people, for instance artists.

Involving a VIP will give the children a feeling that they are going to do something significant (which they are!) and it attracts more attention from the press. It might be possible to arrange an interview with local radio or TV.

The VIP could also provide the warm-up act, give the starting signal, participate in (even a part of) the walk, give a talk to the children, announce the total amount of money raised etc.

The programme

The core activity of Walking for Water is the walk itself. But it is possible to surround the walk with other interesting and fun events for the children and attract more publicity at the same time. Some ideas:

- You could extend the event by organising extra water or project-related activities on the day of the walk. Perhaps the school, the local authorities or a club can come up with an idea. Perhaps the project for which the money is being raised lends itself to related activities.
- Cooperation with businesses, organisations, retailers and clubs can raise the events to a full day of activities. It probably also increases the amount raised, for instance with matching funds. The volunteers and school children might be given a small gift afterwards, for instance locally sponsored T-shirts, ice creams or other snacks, entrance tickets for a local attraction or water exhibition, etc.
- Other educational / fun additions could be a trip to a water treatment plant or pumping station, an African percussion workshop, a musical performance, a storyteller, a water-related balloon competition etc.

Guest lessons

Walking for Water is a sporting activity with a number of educational elements. The aim is to make the children more aware of the importance of clean drinking water and good sanitation in developing countries. Before the walk, most participating schools pay special attention to water-related issues, and this will usually include a guest lesson. The guest lessons are held at least 2 weeks, and no more than 4 weeks, before the walk itself. The lessons should include some information about the project for which the children are raising funds.

Backpacks

In the Netherlands, all the children receive a blue backpack with the Walking for Water logo. Although the event can also be held with available backpacks, the blue backpack both forms a tangible memory of the event for the children, and helps to produce visually attractive photos of groups of children during the walk. Usually, backpacks can be obtained for a few Euros a piece from a local manufacturer.



Publicity

The support centres are responsible for regional and local publicity.

Tips

- Collect editorial contact details of local papers (including free ones), regional radio and TV stations well in advance.
- Keep press releases short (1 page max.). The aim is to whet the appetite. Provide a contact person's details at the bottom of the page. You could also include separate information about the project the walk is raising funds for.
- The press release should look professional. Make sure the address is correct. Where possible address it to a person (most papers print a list of contact names).

Recruiting sponsors

Pupils

The children's achievement to be sponsored is clear: walk 6 km with 6 litres of water! But recruiting sponsors can be done in many ways. The most obvious is to ask parents, other family members, neighbours and friends for money – but there are other ways.

Your task as the support centre is to instruct the schools under your wing and to help them get organised. You can agree amongst yourselves how to divide the tasks. Please note: the children's fundraising is a mandatory part of the event.

We usually assume each child raises an average of € 30 (43 US Dollars).

Tips for schools:

- Start two weeks before the walk with recruiting sponsors, preferably after the guest lesson. The children are motivated and know why they are collecting money.
- Tell the children the best time to catch potential sponsors at home is during the evening meal.
- Practice with the children what they should say – a good opening sentence is important.
- Let the children take care of handling the money themselves. The children will almost certainly achieve their goal. It also means the children do not have to go back to each sponsor after the walk.
- Give the children an envelope or small bag to collect the money.
- It helps the children if the teacher gives them a target amount. In the Netherlands, € 30 per child was more than realistic. This is also close to the cost of a combined drinking water and sanitation installation for one world citizen.

Third party contributions

The money raised by the children can be supplemented with third party contributions, for instance:

- Local clubs (Rotary, Lion etc)
- Local and regional authorities
- Water authorities and water boards
- Local shops and businesses

Tips

- Use the schools to tap into the parents' networks (employers, clubs)
- Use your own network and send flyers and project information sheets
- Try to attract the attention of the local press and highlight the fact that companies and organisations are welcome to contribute to the event.

The day of the walk (in the week of World Water Day 22 March)

6 litres of water

Four plastic soft drink bottles of 1.5 litres each, filled with tap water, make up 6 litres in total. This is the easiest way to measure 6 litres of water and put it into the backpacks (which have been designed to hold 4 bottles). Care should be taken to ensure water is gathered from a sustainable source, especially if the walk is in a region prone to water shortages, and disposed of similarly. Note: it takes thirty children a long time to fill 4 bottles of water. It makes sense to do it the day before – but unless the bottles are then stored in a fridge, the water can no longer be consumed during the walk.



Miscellaneous

Total sum raised

The children should submit their sponsor forms the day before the walk at the latest. The school can then add up how much money the children will collect with the walk.

Insurance

If something happens to the children or teacher during the walk, this should - in principle - be covered by their private insurance rather than the school's insurance. The volunteers should also be covered by their own insurance, both with regard to any injuries they may sustain and their responsibilities during the walk.

However, depending on the jurisdiction, you may wish to take independent legal advice on this matter.

Checklist

When	Activity	Support centre	School
Until end December 2009	Recruit schools		
November 2009 to end January 2010	Recruit volunteers to help with organisational aspects		
	Map and test the walking route, write route description		
	Get permits from local authority		
	Arrange / book guest speakers		
	Recruit volunteers to supervise during the walk		
	Invite VIPs, for instance for giving starting signal		
	Prepare possible extra activities at start and finish		
	Recruit First-Aiders		
February 2010	Guest speaker gives lesson		
	Discuss raising sponsor money with the children		
	Prepare the walk itself: equipment needed and activity programme for start and finish, arrange for sound systems if necessary, snacks for the children, etc.		
	Collect contact details for publicity, prepare press release		
The week before the walk	Send instructions / route description to all concerned		
	Count (pledged) sponsor money and inform support centre		
	Draw up list of contact details of all organisers, VIPs, performing artists, etc, and distribute		
	Let the children fill their water bottles		
Day of the walk, before the start	Mark the route with arrows		
	Fit out start and finish areas		
	Install and check sound system if applicable		
	Fit out rest area and prepare snacks/drinks		
	If not done earlier, fill up the water bottles		
	Check if all children have 6 litres of water in their backpack		
	Welcome VIP		
Day of the walk, during the walk	Make sure everything runs smoothly		
Day of the walk, after the finish	Discard the water used in a sustainable way		
	Coordinate any additional activities if applicable		
	Announce the total amount of money raised (by VIP if possible)		
April 2010	Transfer money to support centre		
	Transfer money to the project or Akvo		
	Register the event and project by e-mailing walkingforwater@akvo.org		
May/June 2010	Follow up: Tell children what has or will be done with the money they raised		

