

Reinventing charity

Lessons from charity: water's innovative approach



Ellie Jefferies creatively leads the nonprofit sector and works as a key leader in the UK charity: water team, an organisation committed to providing clean and safe drinking water to people in need around the globe. As Brand and Marketing Associate Director, Ellie plays a crucial role in spearheading the organisation's branding and partnership efforts across the UK and EU. Her expertise in marketing

At charity: water, we realised early on that trust is a major concern among donors. They want transparency and to know where exactly their money is going. There's been a noticeable shift in how people view charity, particularly among younger donors. Founder Scott Harrison's vision led to the 100% model, where every single penny donated goes directly to water projects. Administrative costs are covered

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and brand management, combined with a deep commitment to social causes, has significantly advanced charity: water's mission.

charity: water has expanded its influence and operations, leveraging cutting-edge technology and creative methodologies to address water scarcity and support sustainable water solutions globally. Ellie's work embodies the organisation's ethos of redefining charity, making it as dynamic and impactful as any leading global brand. Her strategic vision continues to inspire a broad audience, from local communities to international partners, driving forward a powerful mission with both compassion and innovation.

Join us as in our conversation with Ellie to explore how charity: water reinvents charitable giving, making every penny count and every donor story resonate.

How has charity: water redefined transparency in charitable organisations?

by generous philanthropists committed to funding our operations. This model has significantly increased our donors' trust, as they can see their contributions directly impacting lives without any dilution.

Marketing is also crucial for us. Historically, charities haven't leveraged modern marketing techniques as aggressively as the corporate sector. We decided to change that. By employing storytelling and high-quality visual content, we engage our audience emotionally and intellectually. We use professional-grade videography and compelling narratives to tell the human stories behind our water projects, making the issue relatable and urgent.

How do you ensure that charity: water's solutions are sustainable in the long term? One of our biggest concerns is sustainability. We've implemented remote sensors in our projects to monitor water flow and functionality. This allows us to ensure that these projects remain operational and continue to provide clean water without



Ellie Jefferies, Brand and Marketing Associate Director, charity: water

The non-profit charity: water organisation is dedicated to solving the global water crisis by providing clean and safe drinking water to communities in need around the world. Diving into the heart of charity: water's mission, we uncover how they not only aim to ensure universal access to clean water but also strive to reshape public perceptions of what a charity can and should be. From their groundbreaking '100% model' to the use of virtual reality to connect donors with the impact of their contributions, charity: water stands as a testament to the power of innovation in the pursuit of humanitarian goals.

- charity: water's transparent funding model ensures all public donations directly fund water projects, establishing clear trust with donors.
- Ellie Jefferies impactful leadership drives charity: water's marketing and storytelling efforts to emotionally connect donors to their impact.
- Advanced technology for sustainability allows charity: water to use remote sensors to monitor and sustain water project effectiveness over time.
- Empowering women and girls, charity: water focuses on easing water collection burdens for women and girls, promoting gender equality in impacted communities.
- Innovative approaches to water scarcity continues as charity: water explores cutting-edge technologies to expand their impact and address global water challenges.



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Through charity: water's 100% model, every penny funds clean water projects around the world.

needing constant re-investment. It's about creating solutions that not only solve the problem today but continue to work for years to come.

charity: water works with local partners to find and assess communities in need of clean water. Right now, we currently have 58 active partnerships in 22 countries. We've chosen these countries based on their water scarcity, poverty, political stability, and availability of strong local organisations we've partnered with for major change. What's more, we're solution-agnostic. Our partners take existing water sources, terrain, and population into account when choosing a water solution. From household biosand filters to piped

systems that stretch for miles, we work to make sure we're funding the most appropriate solution for each community.

Technology has also been a game-changer in how we manage and monitor our projects. One of our major innovations was the introduction of remote sensors in water projects, funded initially by a grant from Google. These sensors help us ensure sustainability by providing real-time data on water flow, allowing us to address issues promptly and maintain the functionality of water sources long-term.

Right now, our sensors are in Uganda, Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nepal,

Ghana are all countries some model has been piloted in, with more established programmes in some. Visit our [website](#) to find out more.

How does charity: water address gender inequality through its initiatives?

Water collection is a heavy burden that disproportionately falls on women and girls, affecting their health, education, and economic opportunities. In many families, it is primarily women and girls (and sometimes boys) who are tasked with fetching water, often from distant and unsafe sources. This arduous task consumes an estimated 200 million hours daily worldwide, with women in sub-Saharan Africa alone spending about 40 billion hours a year on this chore. This immense investment of time not only leads to what is known as 'time poverty', but it also exposes them to physical and mental health risks, as they carry heavy loads over treacherous routes.

Furthermore, the water they bring back, often contaminated, poses health risks, preventing many from attending school or engaging in economic activities. By providing accessible clean water, we're not just improving health; we're empowering women and girls to pursue education and economic activities. This has a profound ripple effect on their communities, promoting gender equality and lifting households out of poverty. The impact of our work is therefore not only on individual health but also significantly on education and economic participation, especially for women and girls who bear the brunt of the water crisis.

Our partners select water point locations based on geography and assessments of need. They also consider the potential for building strong relationships with local stakeholders, risk of overlap with the work of other organisations, and availability of spare parts and repair services. Additionally, a community's willingness to participate is important, since strong programs require buy-in and participation to sustain water points over time.

Physical factors (such as terrain) play a major part in which water technology is appropriate for an area, but so do cultural factors (like a community's comfort level with the technology design). We also need to make sure that spare parts can be purchased locally.

We tend to focus on nine water solutions – hand-dug wells, drilled wells, gravity-fed systems, piped systems, water purification systems, bio-sand filters, spring protection, rain water catchment systems and latrines.

How does charity: water ensure its projects are culturally appropriate and effective?

We work closely with local communities to

ensure our projects are culturally appropriate and truly beneficial. This includes extensive community involvement from the project planning stages through to completion, ensuring sustainability and local ownership, which are crucial for the project's long-term success.

How does the local context influence charity: water's projects?

Understanding local contexts is key to our project design and implementation. We engage local leaders and community members to ensure our solutions are not only technically viable but also socially and culturally integrated. This community-led approach helps ensure that our projects are accepted, maintained, and valued by the communities they serve. Read more about the communities we work with on our [website](#).

How can individuals contribute to charity: water's mission?

Individuals can get involved in numerous ways. Beyond donations, people can volunteer, participate in fundraising campaigns, or simply spread the word about our work. Each contribution, no matter its size, plays a crucial part in our mission.

What future projects are you excited about?

Looking ahead, we're focusing on expanding our reach and enhancing our technologies to monitor and improve water projects worldwide. We're also exploring new partnerships and continuing to innovate in how we engage with our supporters and the broader public. Every new project is a step toward ending the global water crisis, and we're excited about the possibilities that lie ahead.

From speaking with Ellie, it's clear that charity: water's innovative approaches in transparency, marketing, and technology not only foster trust and engagement but also drive tangible, long-term impacts in communities they serve. This model not only delivers clean water but also redefines the essence of charitable giving, setting a new standard for non-profits worldwide.

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charity: water works with local partners to find and assess communities in need of clean water.



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