

Narrative Stories From Ghana

Probably unlike your hometown, Ghana has a rainy season. This means that for a period of time each year it rains every single day! Even with a rainy season, though, people still worry about water and whether there will be enough of it. Sometimes it does not rain at all in Ghana for days and days.

Many times when there is no water on the ground to drink, it can be found underground. Here in Ghana villagers drill deep holes in the ground called “boreholes” so we can lower buckets and get water. Not far from the center of the village is a borehole. The village also has three wells where clean water can be drawn; however, during the dry season, the probability of these wells drying out is high. The river is nearby and is still the main source of water for bathing and washing, while the wells and borehole are used for cooking and drinking.

The village also has water in pipes, like you might at your home and school, but you must pay for it, so not very many people are able to use the piped water. Piped water is my main source of water. Sometimes when I turn on my water, nothing comes out! Pipes break frequently, and during the dry season the water is turned off weekly to help conserve it. Just in case I don’t have water, I have a big barrel I keep full, but during water shortages, I obtain water from the borehole.

Molly Campbell
Amisano, Ghana

I have to walk with my bucket every day to one of the eight boreholes in my village to get my water. A borehole is similar to a well except it is smaller in diameter, and it is lined with a plastic pipe. The plastic pipe is surrounded by a sand and gravel mixture, which acts as a natural filter.

Fetching water is often done by women and small children. The boreholes are not only a source of water, but they are also a place where people visit with each other and talk. Often I’ll see children playing games there. There is a game similar to “rock, paper, scissors,” but instead of using their hands, the girls jump up and down, moving their legs in different directions while clapping. I still haven’t quite figured it out!

The water I use has some dirt, so I put the borehole water through a filter provided by the Peace Corps to make it safe for drinking.

The other source of water is the river. Many people have stopped using it for drinking, but they still like to bathe and wash clothes with it because it lathers well!

Nell Todd Mafi-Dove
Ghana

Barrels and Buckets: Access to Water
Peace Corps Coverdell World Wise Schools
www.peacecorps.gov/wws/water/africa/

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In my village there are three places to get water. First, there is the River Dayi and some other smaller streams. Second, there are two boreholes. The third source of water is water from above—rainwater.

In my community, the availability of water is not a problem, thanks to the tremendous amount of rainfall that we receive. Not only do people collect this rainwater at their homes with gutters that lead to storage drums, but the rain also keeps the River Dayi at a high level and flowing constantly.

Despite being very hard, the borehole water is definitely the cleanest.

The rainwater in and of itself is good; however, its contact with dusty, metal roofs and dirty gutters generally leaves the first bucket of water quite dirty.

The River Dayi remains the number one water source for the people of Gbefi, despite its volume of sediment and dirt. As to the reasons for its top billing, it is the most consistent water source and has been there the longest, whereas the boreholes are about 15 years old. Also, there are only two boreholes for a community of around 3,000 people, which leads to a great demand and long lines. There are never any lines at the river.

Amy Wiedemann
Gbefi, Volta Region, Ghana