Addressing water poverty in the Western Sahara Desert

Western Sahara is mainly desert with high temperatures and local people in the remote areas where Clifton is assigned, are faced with the challenge of access to this vital resource.

Access to safe water and sanitation and sound management of freshwater ecosystems are essential to human health and to environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.

This is captured in SDG 6, which calls for ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

As part of the MINURSO strategy for community outreach and in support of SDG6, Clifton’s first project was to build and install a water pump and pipe in a remote Western Saharan community.

Before the pump, access to clean water was a challenge for residents, evidenced by the fact that many must still walk 15km or more to access the new pump.
Generally, the burden of getting water is normally left to women and children. They have benefitted greatly out of the project as they do not have to go as far to get water as they did before.

Men too have benefited as they can get water for their animals.

The provision of clean water to the community has improved the overall productivity of these households and has contributed to generating peace and development solutions in the local communities.

From this initial project, Clifton now ensures water quality, availability and accessibility in all 9 team-sites of the MINURSO Mission. This entails regular visits to each site to check, monitor and make improvements where needed.

Recalling his most memorable moment during his time as UNV, around 8 months after installation Clinton visited the area around the pump. To his surprise, he found about 15 camels and 30 goats happily drinking water from the well.

Clifton has always been passionate about about ensuring that people have access to clean Water and Sanitation.

It was this passion that led him to complete a Bachelor in Water and Sanitation Engineering. In his home country of Kenya and prior to becoming a UNV, Clifton managed the technical engineering aspects of sewerage projects and the construction of several water stabilisation ponds.

As a UN Volunteer with MINURSO, I am using the knowledge and skills I have in water and sanitation engineering to improve the livelihoods of those in need and make the world a better place for all.
On the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, UN Volunteers like Clifton are delivering projects that help communities in their efforts to combat the devastating impacts of desertification and drought. The day is a unique moment to remind everyone that land degradation neutrality is achievable through problem-solving, strong community involvement and cooperation at all levels.

This article was prepared with the kind assistance of UN Online Volunteer Helen Maccan

Sub-Saharan Africa

• Western Sahara • water and sanitation • World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

Sustainable Development Goal: