

# A Preventable Disease

Villager shows GAIiN the disease-filled water source he has used for cooking and bathing



## Additional drilling increases the number of lives impacted in Benin

Imagine an ulcer that starts on your leg, and then spreads to your hand, then face. All because you went to your one and only water source and filled up your basin.

Ulcerdaybrillia, which is the water-borne parasite much like leprosy, is extremely common in southern Benin. Most often, people don't experience pain as it kills the nerves and eats the person literally alive. There are no drugs, no antibiotics for this. Only surgery removes it. Yet, even though the surgeries are fairly inexpensive, people have no money to get medical attention. It is one of the most neglected but highly treatable diseases.

Ironically, it is also one of the most preventable diseases. All that is required – clean water! Once a deep-capped water well is provided, this disease can no longer be contracted.

Today, Gilles, a nurse from the Atchonsa village, now stands outside his clinic located across from the water well that Global Aid Network (GAIiN) drilled in June 2009. He shares about this awful disease and how GAIiN helped stop it along with diarrhea and cholera, which were all directly related to the village's previous bad water sources.

With approximately 3,250 people living directly in the village and many more surrounding the village, this clean water proved to be extremely essential to the lives of many individuals.

In November 2009, the Minister of Water for Benin shared that "GAIiN has a heart for the people of Benin. They are different from everyone else because they actually do what they say they will do."

**Water for Life Initiative (WFLI) Grows**  
In February 2010, Dennis Fierbach, Water for Life Initiative Director, and Eric Britton, Project Manager for Water for Life Initiative, inspected the equipment



(Right) Gilles' medical clinic

(Bottom) Gilles talking to our team in front of the well GAIiN drilled



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**Mark Thompson - VP of International Programs for Mercy Ships**

of GAIiN's new partner in Benin – Mercy Ships, a non-governmental ship-based medical organization. After an official agreement was made, Mercy Ships partnered with GAIiN by providing a mud rotary rig for the well drilling in Benin.

"While this rig requires some training," states Britton, "we are so thankful for this additional rig as it now adds more capacity to the WFLI, resulting in a third rig drilling disease-free wells in Benin." Since Mercy Ships has previously worked in Benin as well as other areas throughout Africa, discussions about potential opportunities to work together in the areas of medical clinics and/or agricultural projects were held.

"It is difficult to find like-minded people to work with in the field," shares Mark Thompson - VP of International Programs for Mercy Ships, "GAIiN is one of the few NGOs that Mercy Ships know of that have agreements and working relationships with governments at the highest level."

With 160 wells drilled to date in Benin, the WFLI continues to look for more ways to help prevent others from getting awful diseases such as ulcerdaybrillia.