

# Field Report

## Haiti

*by Michael Hutchinson, Staff Writer*

As we followed 8-year-old Kesliene Jean back to her village, I started to feel bad with each step I took behind her. Here I was – a healthy, 34-year-old man – trailing a young girl as she lugged a five-gallon bucket of water atop her head.



Wanting to help, I offered to carry Kesliene's bucket for her the rest of the way. I picked the bucket up and carried it as best I could. But after a couple of minutes, my right arm began to give out – I simply could not carry it. *How am I going to get this bucket two miles back to the girl's village?* I thought.

I tried hoisting the water-filled container above my head as I had seen Kesliene do, but it didn't help. Incredulous and a bit embarrassed, I was forced to give the bucket back to the young girl, who continued to carry it as she has done so many times before.



Every day, Kesliene treks approximately two miles from her family's hut to a polluted stream in northern Haiti. Using a head wrap for balance, the little girl somehow trudges the two miles back home with a 40-pound bucket overhead. And she makes this trip five times a day – under a baking sun and over desert-like terrain – in order to collect unclean water.

"My neck hurts [every day]," said Kesliene. As I spoke with her, I noticed that the stream next to us was brown and murky.

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(continued)

Several families were knee-deep in the water, washing clothes, bathing and retrieving water.

"I ask God to give us other water," said Kesliene. "To change the river into good water. And to make the river closer." Shortly after she said this, our conversation was eerily interrupted as a dead dog floated downstream.



I couldn't imagine bathing or washing clothes in such water, much less drinking from it. But for families and villages like Kesliene's, there is no other choice.

After I returned from Haiti, the water fountain located conveniently down the hall in my office took on new meaning. My grocery store's bottled water selection became humbling.

I will not forget Kesliene and her plight. Because tonight I will walk into my kitchen for a glass of clean water... and tomorrow Kesliene will hike two miles for a contaminated one.