



**14.** A key element to safe water is developing sanitation facilities. The borehole well makes this possible. Here the workers are making concrete footprints on the cover of a latrine. The user will place her/his feet on these marks before squatting over the central key-shaped hole. (Niger)

**15.** Microcredit programs are incredibly successful in those villages where sustainable borehole wells are developed. The wells free the women from the need to fetch and haul water. Women undertake many enterprises, including the batik dying of clothes and cloth shown here. (Ghana)

**16.** Abu (Abanisa) is how everyone addresses this remarkable woman in Safo village. She is in charge of the microcredit program, raising and selling goats, in which 147 of the village women participate. Abu has an incredible presence about her. She is authoritative, smart, knowledgeable, strong, beautiful, and respected by all. (Niger)

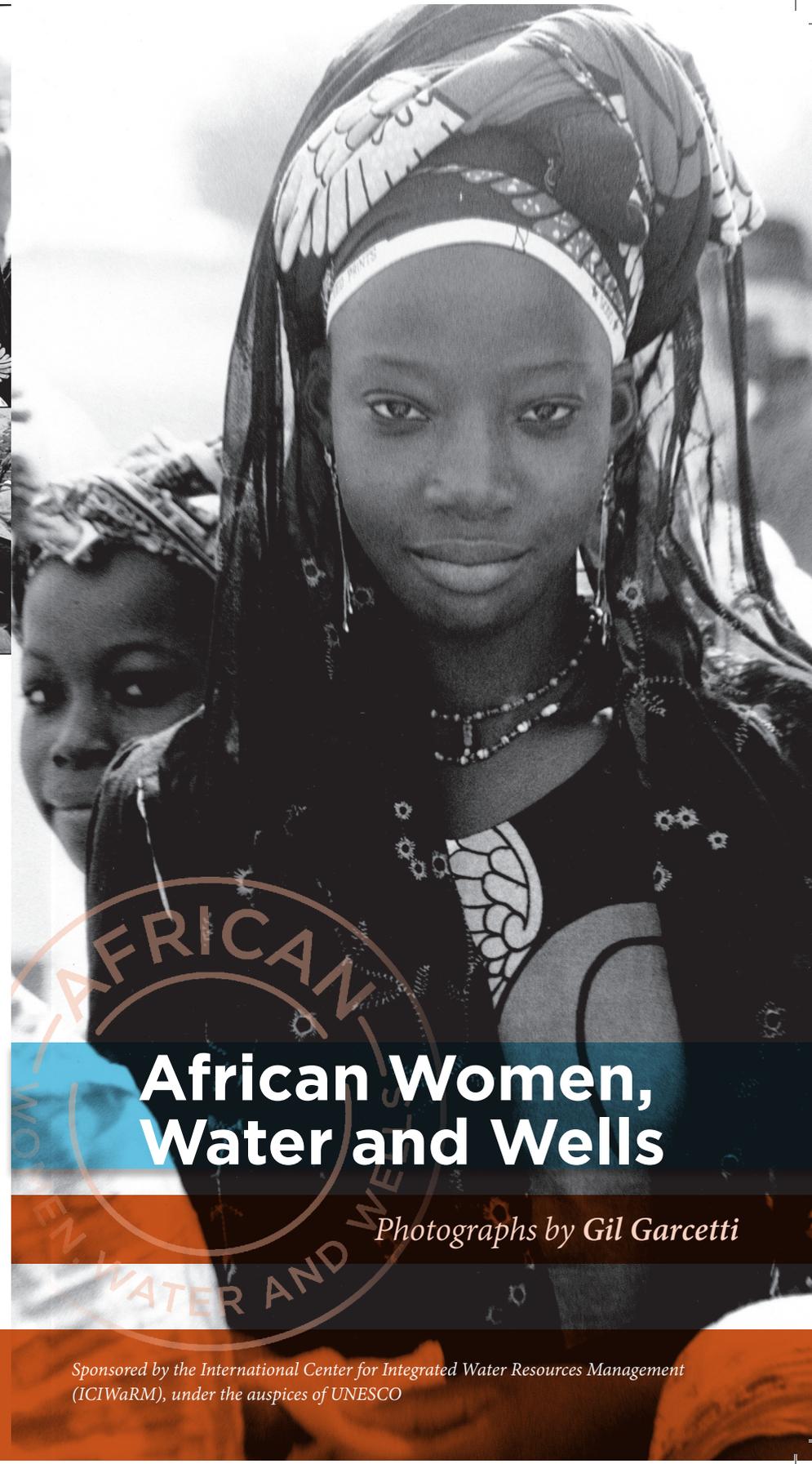
**17.** Contamination stains the gauze used to filter filtered water gathered from a traditional well. (Ghana)

**18.** This young girl is the oldest student in her classroom, and one of only two girls in the school. (Niger)

**19.** The chief of this village was a generously spirited man, who wanted his grandson in the photo I took of him. This photo conveys much of what is West Africa—hope, gentleness, spirit, strength, and beauty. (Niger)

**20.** (Mali)

**21.** The entire village celebrates the successful borehole well—a life-changing experience for the village and its people. “WATER IS KEY” is painted on the old piece of wood, a fundamental phrase and true statement. (Ghana)



# African Women, Water and Wells

*Photographs by Gil Garcetti*



1. A Dogon village with cliff-hanging structures in the background. (Mali)
2. This village and land is typical of the rural landscapes in Niger, Mali, Ghana, and Burkina Faso. During the dry season or in times of drought, the land is rock hard. Unless the village has a nearby well or stream, family vegetable garden plots are unsustainable. (Niger)
3. The girls and women not only carry heavy loads of water, but dense dust also permeates every pore of their skin as well as everything they wear or possess. This dust is carried by the Harmattan winds from the Sahara Desert throughout most of West Africa five to six months each year. (Burkina Faso)
4. Typical standing water ponds in West Africa. The pond water lasts a few months, then the girls and women must trek even further to gather the water they need each day. Villagers pick up parasites, such as Guinea worms, from these kinds of ponds and streambeds. (Burkina Faso)
5. Throughout the region young girls like this one carry large containers of water on their heads as they carry a baby sister or brother on their back. This girl is about nine years old. She has never attended school. (Niger)
6. The girls take water from a “traditional” water well—one that was dug by hand, has no cover, receives little if any maintenance, and likely has livestock contributing to water contamination. (Ghana)
7. Pulling up water from a traditional well is extremely hard work. Women do 99 percent of this work, although the men of the village often fetch water for their animals. Beginning in her preteen years, every woman participates in this back-breaking, daily chore. (Ghana)
8. A villager pours water, brought to her by her young daughter from a “traditional” well, into a gauze-covered cistern. This crude process filters out some of the contamination in the water. (Ghana)
9. Villagers pick up parasites, such as Guinea worms, from standing water ponds and streambeds. It took almost an hour for the health specialist to remove the nearly 3-foot long worm from the man’s arm. (Ghana)
10. (Ghana)
11. This is the day these villagers have waited for—a safe water borehole well next to their village. The rejoicing went on for hours. (Niger)
12. Safe water from borehole well. (Ghana)
13. With a successful borehole well, one of the first things youngsters are taught is to wash their eyes two or three times a day. The simple act of rinsing eyes with safe water greatly contributes to healthier eyes. (Ghana)

