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Water and Sustainable Development
From vision to action



Civil Society pillar - Lead case on WASH, Mweteni Village, Mweteni, Tanzania

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Short summary

The Mweteni Village is located high up in the Pare mountains in northern Tanzania. The community has faced acute shortage of safe water for a long time. Sanitation was virtually non-existent. This led to outbreaks of water borne diseases and excessive time spent on fetching water hampering the economic and social development of the community, women in particular. The situation worsened when HIV/ AIDS entered the community.

Not being among the selected 10 villages of the same district covered under the Tanzania Water Sector Development Programme (WSDP), Tegemeo Women Group of Mweteni took the initiative to address the challenge of accessing adequate, reliable drinking water for their community themselves. With the support of the Women for Water Partnership, the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme and Aqua for All, TWG engaged the village leadership and district authorities to jointly develop a comprehensive WASH scheme covering the four sub-villages and approximately 12,000 inhabitants.

The project includes five gravity schemes piping water from perennial springs, rainwater harvesting systems for the hospital and four schools, sanitation demonstration facilities, hygiene training programmes including train-the-trainers, the establishment of a water user association (COMWE) and local water user committees, and a purpose community centre. Financing has been obtained in phases and from a variety of donors including WfWP, Aqua for All, GETF/RAIN, Marie-Stella-Maris, Retourschip Foundation, Soroptimists of Wassenaar and Delft and various private donations. The Tegemeo Women Group, Mweteni community and Same District contributed in kind.

The project is unique in that it was initiated and carried by a local women's group who have ensured and maintained full engagement of the community despite the prolonged time between project development and implementation. They have built trust and restored confidence of the Mweteni people who had seen many consultants and development NGOs pass without resulting in improvement of their situation. They have effectively prevented corruption and achieved a financing scheme on the basis of ability to pay to cover costs of maintenance and repair. In the process, TWG became a solid and capable civil society group leading social and economic development initiatives their community.

Issues addressed:

WASH (inequalities, schools, health centers, refugee camps, women and girls)

Schools and hospital did not have access. Pupils, teachers and nurses spent hours per day to provide for basic needs. The community decided to give priority to these needs. Public entities cannot afford to pay for the water they need; therefore RWH systems were provided that schools and hospital can maintain themselves.

Water resources management (water-use efficiency, integrated water resources management, transboundary cooperation, sustainable extraction and supply of freshwater)

Water comes from remote perennial springs and was collected from source or streams. Piped water is now brought to central collection points decided by the community. The system is managed and maintained by Water User Committees and Water User Association who determine allocation and price; oversight by District Water Engineer.

Water quality is now monitored.

Risks (mortality, economic losses caused by natural and human-induced disasters)

Extreme weathers are on the increase; dealing with this is part of the multi-annual development plan of Tegemeo Women Group.

Tools for implementation:

Construction of drinking water supply and sanitation systems:

Construction of gravity schemes (5), rainwater harvesting installations for public buildings (5), demonstration toilets and a WASH community centre.

Stakeholder involvement:

Local women were empowered and coached to lead the process, using the WfWP empowerment tools. Thus TWG ensured full involvement of community, district and village government from the onset.

Awareness raising campaigns:

Project includes PHAST training; selected community members are now PHAST trainers conducting refresher courses.

Strengthens the participation of women in decision making at local and national levels:

Tegemeo Women Group is a member of the Women for Water Partnership and as such, had access to the WfWP small grants programme, capacity development tools and peer coaching mechanism. This has enabled them to take the lead in their community and to obtain a strong voice in decision-making at community and district level.

Who is involved?

There has been a lengthy project development process focusing on cooperation of local actors and true involvement of the community. As a result, implementation has been participatory too, with clearly defined roles of District, Village authorities, water sector specialists and civil society; and with active contributions (unpaid labor) of community members. The project is monitored by a Project Oversight Group consisting of the District, Village authorities, Water User Association and Tegemeo Women group.

What were the objectives of the intervention?

To achieve universal and sustainable access; to position women as agents of change in their community and to boost social and economic development.

Implementation challenges

Traditional gender divides; women not involved in decision making. Lack of capacity, human resources and political will of local authorities. Lack of financial resources; reluctance of donors to support women-lead projects. Lack of awareness of local population on water laws and policies, WASH issues. Remoteness of the area; unprecedented bad weather conditions during building phase. Corruptive practices of local project manager and contractors. Reporting requirements not matching local realities and capabilities; communication restrictions because of unreliable internet.

Main task/activities undertaken / Tools used

Building of water gravity schemes: following the technical method of the District Water Engineer; WfWP added social component ensuring a participatory approach. Feasibility studies preceded the project design. Construction of RWH units for hospital and schools: based on feasibility study; handed over to the management of the public buildings who are responsible for maintenance; oversight by District Water Engineer Multi purpose WASH community centre: on initiative of TWG. The Community centre has electricity as spin-off of TWG-Same District cooperation; Demonstration ecological toilet to develop sanitation for all Hygiene training, including Train-the-Trainers for follow-up: using the PHAST methodology Establishment of Water User Association (COMWE) and local Water User Committees to ensure sustainable management and maintenance of facilities Project Oversight Group of local partners to ensure joined decision making, transparency and local ownership. Developing saving money in a local way ('vikoba').

Main outcomes / impacts (what has changed?)

- Access to safe water for different community uses; Increased awareness on hygiene and adequate sanitation;
- Increased understanding and awareness of public sector and other interested stakeholders on water governance and addressing water-related risks;

- Children effectively receive 4 hours per week extra education because of water proximity; they receive healthy meals because of water for school vegetable gardens;
- Improved health reported (not yet monitored) quantitatively;
- Prominent role of women on communication on water and sanitation related issues and full participation in decision making processes; one of the TWG members stood for local elections;
- Economic development of the community boosted.

Lessons Learned:

Triggers:

- Acuteness of water access because HIV/AIDS entered the community
- TWG membership of Women for Water Partnership.

Drivers: Women leadership in the community, which was made possible through WfWP was the main driver for community action. An important element was having access to information regarding Tanzanian water law and policy, as well as being informed on the Human Rights Based approach. Having a strong women's civil society group triggers changes in traditional practices.

Barriers:

- Government schemes not reaching remote communities. Not being connected and not having knowledge of rights and opportunities renders communities interest.
- Traditional gender divides exclude women from playing an active role in community development
- Financial support to strengthen women's civil society are extremely limited; the process of local empowerment is largely ignored as a prerequisite for sustainability of interventions;
- Distance between WfWP central office and project location; having reliable intermediates remains a challenge.

What has worked well?

- Cooperation of local stakeholders;
- Community mobilization;
- Women's involvement in decision-making

What can be improved?

- Capacity building of local actors, in particular on financial management and reporting to donors;
- Functioning of the Water User Committees;
- Internet connection

The way forward: Same District has expressed an interest in partnership with Tegemeo Women Group and WfWP to upscale this successful approach.

Links:

www.womenforwater.org