

IMPROVING FUNCTIONAL ACCESS TO SAFE WATER THROUGH STRENGTHENING WATER MANAGEMENT GROUPS - CASE OF BUTIITI SUB COUNTY IN KYENJOJO DISTRICT

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Sector: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

CHALLENGE

Kyenjojo is one of the districts in the Rwenzori region in mid-Western Uganda. The district has a population of 420,605¹ people with an annual growth rate of 3.8%, one of the highest in the country. The total population in the district as at June 2009 is 444,624 people. The safe water coverage in the district is 68%² and functionality stands at 85%³. However, the district water office report indicates safe water coverage at 60.2% as at end of June 2009 realised through funding from the District Water and Sanitation Conditional Grant. This increment in access is serving an estimated additional population of 251,810 people for the FY 2008/09.

There are 14 sub counties in Kyenjojo district and Butiiti, with a population of about 40,000 people is one of them. One of the major issues affecting access to safe water in the district generally and Butiiti sub county specifically is poor Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of facilities, especially the Gravity Piped Schemes. This manifests in non-functional systems partly as a result of non-functional water management structures (water Boards and tap-stand committees), low community participation and contribution towards O&M, and lack of transparency and accountability within the management structures where these exist.

Butiiti is served by two Gravity Flow Scheme (GFS) complimented by a few protected springs. One of these is Mukunyu GFS and it serves Mukunyu parish and a few households in Butiiti parish. The GFS, constructed in 2004, has an 8km transmission pipeline from the source (spring) to the reservoir tank located at Mukunyu hill. The scheme has a total of 26 taps (six public, 14 private and six institutional tap stands) serving a population of 2,600 people in 714 households. There is total of 1774 people in the six institutions including one secondary school, one primary school, one teacher training college, one health unit, one church parish and one prison.

Shortly after construction, the GFS broke down due to technical reasons and did not function well for the two subsequent years. In 2007, the district prioritized the rehabilitation of the scheme but this did not improve access to safe water for the 4,374 people in the parish as the tap stands soon run dry.

CLIENTS

SNV, made a deliberate effort to work with the district and the sub county to ensure the GFS has a management structure in place. A Water Board and Tap Stands Committees were elected. This case highlights the positive outputs and outcomes of the assignment that has enabled approximately 11% of the population in Butiiti Sub County to have constant access to safe water since November 2008.

¹ Kyenjojo DDP (2007/08 – 2009/10)

² Joint sector review report for 2007/08

³ Joint sector review report for 2007/08

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

Goal of assignment

- To increase access to safe water for 4,374 people in Butiiti Sub County through strengthening the decentralised Community-Based Maintenance Structures such as the Water Board and the Tap Stand Committees.

It is envisaged that the district will roll out the resultant good practices from Mukunyu GFS to the rest of the sub counties in the next 2 years hence leading to 100% functionality of GFS in the district.

The approach used was working with the district water office and the sub county to:

- Develop a criteria for selection of the Water Management Board and the Tap Stand Committees such as representation by gender, categories of water users, among others
- Facilitate the User Community to select the Water Board and the Tap Stand Committees. The Water Board has a membership of 9 people with representation from community, the institutions, and the sub county.
- SNV, in conjunction with the Technical Support Unit 6 (TSU #6) of Directorate of Water Development, conducted training for the Water Board and representatives of the Tap Stand Committees. Focus of the training was on:
 - the roles and responsibilities (of the Board as the main Management Structure, and the Tap Stand Committees) and their linkage and working relationships.
 - community contribution to operation and maintenance costs— why, how much, who, when,
 - basic financial management skills, transparency and accountability to the users
 - benefits of the water Board upon registering with the Mid-Western Umbrella Organisation of Directorate of Water Development
 - work plan development
 - integration of household hygiene promotion in the water Board's activities
- Support supervision by the Sub County and/or district, including monitoring and evaluation and reporting mechanisms.

OUTCOME

There is marked improvement in the performance of the Management Structures of the GFS. This progress is reflected by:

- Improved supply of safe water without any break-down in the system or any of the taps since the Water Board and Tap Stand Committees were put in place and trained in November 2008.
- The Water Board and the Tap Stand Committees for the 12 public and institutional taps have all been fully functional in the last 8 months since the intervention. All categories of Water Users such as the Mukunyu trading centre community, the rural community, the institutions, and the sub county are represented on the Water Board
- Community's attitude towards contribution to Operation and Maintenance (O&M) has positively changed. For example, the Water Board collects UGX 200,000= (approx. \$100) per month through Tap Stand Committees for O&M. On average, the Water Board spends UGX 100,000= (approx. \$50) on a monthly basis on minor repairs.
- The Water Board holds monthly meetings to discuss operational issues of the scheme and present accountability of funds collected. The Board has receipt books, payment vouchers and invoices to improve transparency and accountability for user fees paid by communities. In addition, the Board has opened up a scheme operations bank account as one way of improving their financial management systems and to avoid spending user fees as collected.

- The Board registered with the Mid-Western Umbrella Organisation of Water and Sanitation (MWUWS) of Directorate of Water Development and has paid the annual subscription fees. After registration with the MWUWS the Water Board is already enjoying some benefits in terms of access to services such as spare parts. MWUWS plans to install meters on the GFS so as to create a sustainable revenue base for the scheme and to construct water kiosks in Mukunyu trading centre to improve efficiency and minimise loss. MWUWS will also conduct a study about the potential of the proposed new connections (extension of the scheme) by the Water Board to other clients for purposes of raising the revenue base as well as supplying water to more community members.
- The Water Board developed a 2-year work plan 2009-2011, incorporating hygiene and sanitation promotion. This was submitted to the sub county and incorporated in the district plan and budget for FY 2009/10. At the Kyenjojo DWSCC meeting held in May 2009, this scheme was visited by stakeholders and it was observed that 'their budget is balanced towards software and hardware investment' by the field visit team at Mukunyu.

IMPACT

A total of 4,374 people in Mukunyu parish have continued access to safe water supply. Mukunyu GFS is now an excellent example of good O&M practice and is now the reference point for the district. Recently, upon recommendation of Kyenjojo district, the GFS hosted visitors from SNV/North East Portfolio for a Learning (Exchange) visit. The North East Portfolio team comprised of District and Sub County-level Technical Staff, SNV Advisors and Politicians from the districts of Mbale, Kumi and Kapchorwa.

The preparations and presentations made by the Water Board of the GFS had lasting impressions on the visiting team who saw that O&M of piped schemes is possible once management structures are in place, trained and functional. They were impressed by evidence on the ground and their attitudes towards community participation were positively influenced. They realised that communities can actually participate and make financial contributions towards O&M as long as there is transparency and accountability for the funds collected.

The district water office has planned, with further support from SNV, to roll out the experience of Mukunyu to the rest of the problematic GFS systems in the district.

LESSONS LEARNED

- i. Identification of O&M of water facilities as a challenge and the commitment from the district and sub counties to improve the status quo is very vital to contribute to increased access to safe water by communities
- ii. Capacity strengthening for decentralised water management structures through Public-Private Partnerships to take charge and focus on enabling them comprehend their roles & responsibilities is key to improving the functionality of water systems
- iii. Governance issues especially transparency and accountability if not well addressed by the management structures, may lead to lack of trust and eventually affect community participation and contribution towards O&M of water facilities
- iv. Willingness to learn by the district and the sub counties and the ability to use the lessons to improve management of water points and systems is very critical for sustainability of water systems
- v. There is need for mechanisms, opportunities and avenues to share the O&M experiences and lessons for purposes of replication e.g. through the District Water and Sanitation Coordination Committees (DWSCC) and through the LeaPPS platforms

- vi. Ability of the management structures at water facility level to develop work plans for inclusion in the sub county plans & subsequently in district plans and budgets will ensure sustainability of investments.
- vii. Water points are better managed and sustainability is guaranteed when all the concerned stakeholders (including the sub counties) are members of the water management structures, especially with women playing a vital role on the Water Boards and Tap Stand Committees.
- viii. Documentation of successful outcome-level cases encourages continuity of good management practices amongst GFS or community management models.